

ART EDUCATION

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Memory



Humor



Bubbles

Inquiry

Fantasy

Cultural
Mythology

IF YOU HAVE
SOMETHING TO SAY
RAISE YOUR HAND
AND PLACE IT
OVER YOUR MOUTH

Parody



Art Talks!

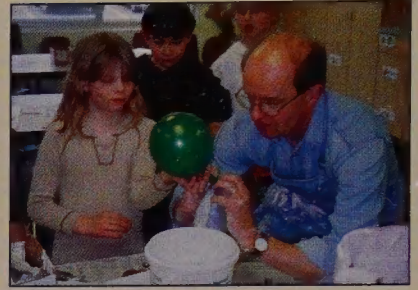
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- Conceptualization as a Critical Component of Artmaking
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- Eric Garcia: Warrior With a Pen

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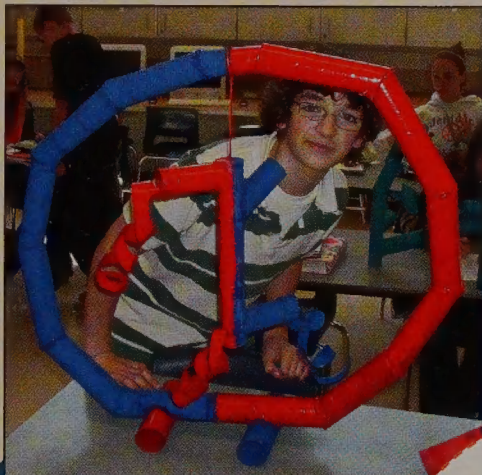
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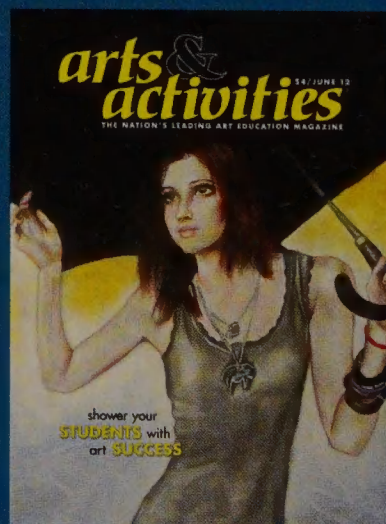


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National Art Education Association

NOVEMBER 2013

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Cover, from top: (1) *Bubbles* (2012). Pages 36-37, from "Humor in a Disruptive Pedagogy: Further Considerations for Art Educators." Used with courtesy/permission of the artist, Michael Hernandez de Luna, and the Carl Hammer Gallery (Chicago). (2) Pages from *Picture Pals* book project. Page 25, from "Picture Pals: An Intergenerational Service-Learning Art Project." (3) *Attitude*, by Johanna IsoJarvenpaa (2004). www.elfwood.com/~ohan2/Attitude.3487917.html. Page 14, from "Enchanting Tales and Imagic Stories: The Educational Benefits of Fanart Making."

Talkin' loud and sayin' nothing.

—James Brown

I have nothing to say, and

Art has the power to speak, very loudly at times. As indicated in the James Brown song quoted above, communication can act as a show of force, devoid of meaningful content. The parent, the politician, and the pedagogue have each, at one time or another, been accused of such abuses of power.

Art can also speak in ways that other forms of communication cannot. Art can operate in between the written and the spoken word, with the ability to say much with very little effort. As John Cage describes, one can speak to abstract philosophical states of being through simple speech acts.

This issue of *Art Education* is centered on the relationship between visual arts, art education, and narrative. As many art educators know, the creative process often entails narrative, whether in the form of a written story or tale, as spoken dialogue that accompanies the creation or the reception of a work of art. Artmaking can be loud, and say nothing, just as it can say nothing in a profound manner. The authors in this issue speak to numerous forms of narrative: dialogue that engages with memory and increases inquiry; artmaking that taps into fantasy tales and popular visual culture; artists and entertainers that challenge and subvert dominant narratives through humor and parody. These narratives are described through the following terms: Inquiry, Fantasy, Memory, Dialogue, Humor, Parody, and Cultural Mythology.

Inquiry

In "Inquiry and Critical Thinking in an Elementary Art Program," Nancy Lampert discusses an inquiry-based research project carried out in an after-school elementary art setting. As Lampert found, students were able to learn much about their own artmaking through guided conversations, effectively communicating certain important aspects of their process, while also finding challenges in miscommunication.

Fantasy

Marjorie Cohee Manifold explores the possibilities for fanart narratives in "Enchanting Tales and Imagic Stories: The Educational Benefits of Fanart Making." In this essay, Manifold discusses the possibilities for artmaking derived from popular culture sources such as fantasy television shows and manga. She also is clear about the limitations of such possibilities, rooted in the derivative nature of such forms of expression, along with its content, which can often be violent and/or sexual in nature.

Memory

In "Picture Pals: An Intergenerational Service-Learning Art Project," Susan Whiteland analyzes a service-learning experience that paired elementary schoolchildren with older adults. In these exchanges, young and old would share stories, often based on personal memories, and would then create artworks based upon these stories.

Dialogue

Christina Chin, in "Cultivating Divergent Thinking: Conceptualization as a Critical Component of Artmaking," provides an in-depth look into the complexities of dialogue in an elementary art classroom. In this setting, contemporary art provides the inspiration for elaborate interpretive narratives to develop, and for young learners to create works based upon these narratives.

Humor

Sheri R. Klein discusses the role that humor plays in contemporary art and art education, in "Humor in a Disruptive Pedagogy: Further Considerations for Art Educators." Klein suggests that art educators might explore the notion of the trickster-pedagogue, a figure that uses humor to unsettle social norms and cultural stereotypes in order to explore the liminal spaces between individuals and ideas.

I am saying it.

—John Cage

Parody

John Derby looks to the Comedy Central show *The Colbert Report* for pedagogical opportunities for parody, in “The Truthiness About *The Colbert Report*.” In this article, Derby presents the reader with an overview of the complex comedic dynamics at play in the program, outlining possibilities for art educators to engage with political issues through subversion and silliness.

Cultural Mythology

In this issue’s Instructional Resource, Judith Briggs discusses the work of Eric Garcia, in “Eric Garcia: Warrior With a Pen.” Briggs provides art educators with numerous suggestions for creating political cartoons that utilize various strategies, including symbolism, exaggeration, analogy, and irony.

While these authors present a wide variety of narrative forms, there are surely many more to be found in the creative spaces of art education.

What ideas speak to you? Which are talking loud and saying nothing? Are there ideas that say nothing, yet speak loudly? I encourage you, the reader, to add your own narrative to this conversation. Blog about ideas that you think are relevant, or post excerpts on social media sites. Talk about the articles with students, colleagues, and friends. Or, write a letter to the editor, as the fine folks to the right of this column have done.

Robert Sweeny, Editor

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

May 22, 2013

Dear Editors,

We are writing in response to Robert Sweeny’s Editorial, “Ten Ways of MAKING,” which largely serves as an introduction to the varied articles included in the March 2013 issue of *Art Education*. We found that Dr. Sweeny’s focus on “making” touches upon an important resurging social practice, and it is exciting to see *Art Education* provide a forum for these ideas as they relate specifically to the Arts.

While we agree that education in the Arts has long been about making and can appreciate the ten methods that Dr. Sweeny calls to mind, we were surprised to see that the DIY renaissance (commonly referred to as the “maker movement”) was not given serious consideration in the dialogue. Aside from Dr. Sweeny’s brief reference to Maker Faires, mention of the emerging movement—which is deeply connected to the recent proliferation of fablabs and hacker spaces, growing networks of DIY enthusiasts, and the increasing interest in bringing maker-based experiences into educational settings—was conspicuously absent.

In his Editorial, Dr. Sweeny suggests the Arts were the first method by which making was incorporated into education. Whether this is or is not true (and indeed it is a debatable point), it is important to note that now in the second decade of the 21st century, “making” has taken on a life of its own. As the maker movement continues to gain prominence in educational settings, we wonder if traditional arts and maker-based educational initiatives can work synergistically to meet the goals of the larger educational discourse surrounding 21st-century skills and career readiness.

Given this opportunity, we feel it would be prudent for the field of arts education to reimagine itself in relation to the maker movement and begin an authentic dialogue—potentially on the pages of *Art Education*—with this burgeoning field that is quickly capturing the attention of the very educators, parents, and policymakers the Arts have been trying to woo for decades. We look forward to such a discussion!

Sincerely,

Edward P. Clapp and Raquel L. Jimenez
Harvard Graduate School of Education
Cambridge, Massachusetts

February 20, 2013

Dear Dr. Sweeny,

In reference to the “Ten Ways of MAKING” categorically identified, may I suggest one more: *phenomenology*, or the study of the development of human consciousness and self-awareness, perhaps first experienced in the caves of Lascaux, France, centuries ago—experientially, a long way from today’s pursuit of money and fame. There is no more critical time than now for children to seek through art their uniqueness, however mortal.

Sincerely,

Bob Lloyd
Brooklyn, New York

Children participate in an after-school art program that increases their critical thinking skills and builds tolerance.

Inquiry and Critical Thinking

in an Elementary Art Program

.....
NANCY LAMPERT

Critical thinking is thought-focused on how to solve a well-defined problem, when several alternative solutions to the problem exist (Ennis, 2002; Paul, Elder, & Bartell, 1997; Perry, 1999). Because critical thinking may help to build tolerance toward others, I believe it is a worthwhile subject to investigate, given that we live in an increasingly multicultural society full of varying viewpoints.

As an artist, I had a hunch that art students were more open-minded and tolerant than many other college students. For my dissertation (Lampert, 2005), I designed a study that tested the critical dispositions of 141 arts and non-arts undergraduates at one university. The results of the quantitative study, using statistical analysis, showed that inquiry-based learning in the Arts positively influences undergraduates' disposition to think critically, as opposed to non-art undergraduates (Lampert, 2006a).

Inquiry-Based Artmaking

Psychologist Jerome Bruner (1960) was one of the first researchers to write about inquiry-based instruction. He wrote:

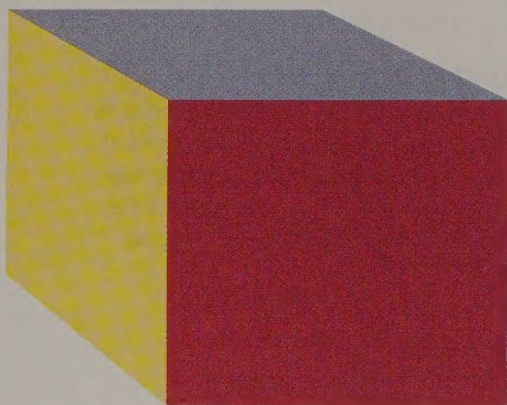
Mastery of the fundamental ideas of a field involves not only the grasping of general principles, but also the development of an attitude toward learning and inquiry, toward guessing and hunches, toward the possibility of solving problems on one's own. (p. 19)

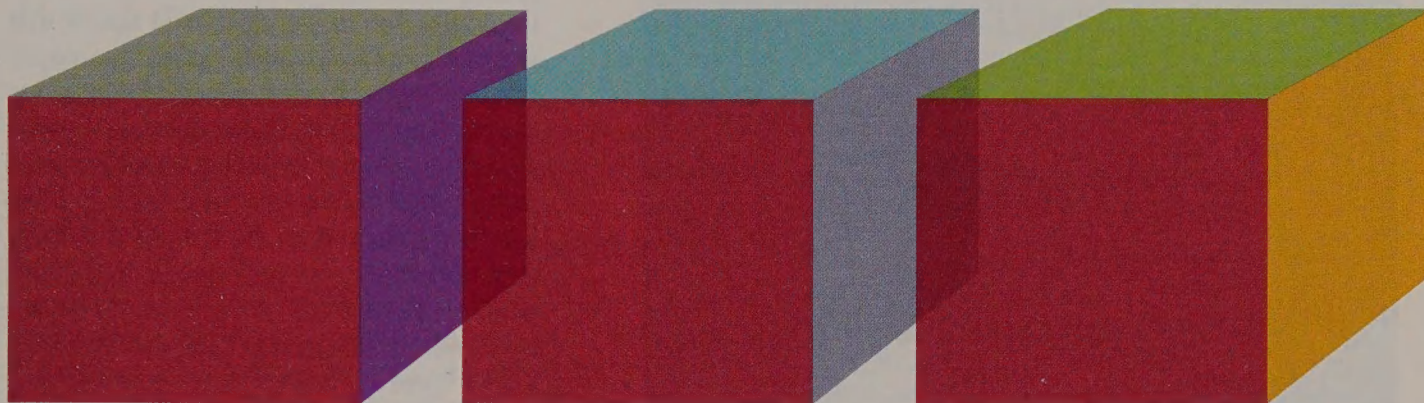
Educational psychologist Alison King has researched the links between inquiry-based instruction and instructional techniques that stimulate critical thinking in both K-12 and college students (King, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1995, 2002; King, Staffieri, & Adalgais, 1998). Her work has focused on a technique for developing students' critical thinking by utilizing "question stems" as discussion starters. King's research has shown that

question stems facilitate higher-order critical thinking by requiring students to reflect upon and reconcile various perspectives and solutions for open-ended problems. King (1994) states that students are required to think deeply when responding to inquiry-based, open-ended prompts using question stems such as "What are the implications of...? Explain why... Explain how... What is the counterargument for?" (p. 24). Developing thoughtful rejoinders to these open-ended questions and considering the varied responses of fellow classmates enables students to reconcile and link the new ideas (Lampert, 2006b).

Stewart and Walker (2005) recommend that art teachers move away from direct instruction to a model of inquiry, or indirect instruction, "guiding students in their own investigations... this often means designing strategies that will guide students to raise [and answer their own] questions" (p. 81). For example, an art teacher might ask a 3rd-grade class to view on a screen two projected landscapes—*Starry Night* by Van Gogh and *Peaceable Kingdom* by Edward Hicks. Using question stems, the teacher asks: "What do you see? What colors are used in *Starry Night*? Why did the artist use these colors? What colors do you see in *Peaceable Kingdom*? How are these two landscapes different? How are they the same?"

The teacher then asks the class to use oil pastels on paper to draw their own landscapes





in any way they choose. The class displays the finished landscapes and the students are asked what they see in each drawing. Each child's art looks different because each student has solved the art problem in a slightly different way. In this example, the classroom of children has expanded their notion of landscapes and what they see around them.

After-School Art Program

I set out to continue my research in critical thinking by designing an Institutional Review Board (IRB)-approved, mixed-methods study of an after-school elementary art program. The goal of the program was to serve the community by offering low-income neighborhood children the chance to make inquiry-based art, which I believed could deepen their cognitive ability to think critically. The study focused on three variables: inquiry-based artmaking, discussions about art, and a friendly, kind atmosphere in the classroom.

Implementing the After-School Program

In the after-school program, eight undergraduate university students and I designed and implemented an inquiry-based art curriculum for 10 underserved, urban elementary school children. These children typically have art class for less than an hour a week in their public school. We supplemented that instruction with 3 additional hours of art class a week, through an after-school arts program conducted twice a week.

The undergraduates formed three teams to brainstorm ideas for lessons. Most of the lesson plans the undergraduates designed started with a PowerPoint presentation. The PowerPoints usually included examples by

The goal of the program was to serve the community by offering low-income neighborhood children **the chance to make inquiry-based art**, which I believed could deepen their cognitive ability to think critically.

several artists of the artmaking the students would be focusing on. During these presentations, the children were given question stems to interpret what they saw and to explain it to the group.

To model the teaching approach for the program, I designed the first lesson for the children, as an example for the undergraduates. I then presented the lesson to the undergraduates before the first session with the children began. I explained that the "Big Idea" (Walker, 2001) of *identity* would be the focus of each inquiry-based art lesson. I chose identity as a Big Idea to emphasize the difference of each child's viewpoint. Since each child is unique, I explained that the children's artwork should be an original expression of their identity and ideas. I asked the undergraduates to show the children a variety of cultural exemplars when introducing lessons, but to never suggest the students imitate the examples; rather, I asked them to encourage the children to develop their own personal visual expressions.

Implementing and Reflecting on Lesson 1—Inside/Outside Identity Boxes

I taught the first lesson to the children. It entailed having the children create identity boxes, which expressed on the exterior how they believed people saw them; and on the interior, how they saw themselves. What makes this lesson inquiry-based is the fact that the children were not asked to emulate any other box; rather, they were asked to create a box that reflected their own identity. The sessions also included friendly, inquiry-based discussions with the group before, during, and after the production of art.

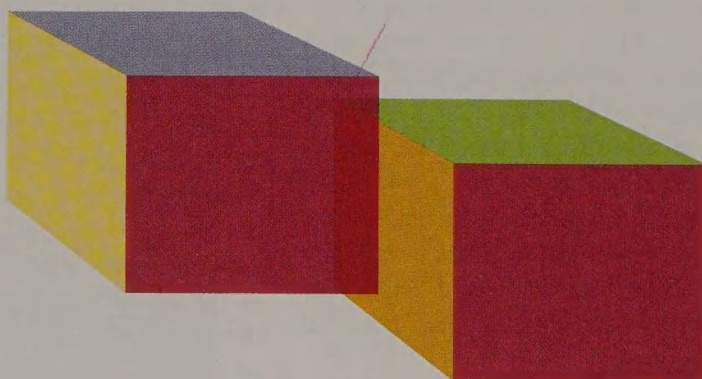
The first day of the program I introduced myself and the undergraduates to the children and I explained that our group would be making art with them and talking with them about art and ideas. I read to the children the one class rule we had: "Please treat everyone in the room with respect." I then explained the lesson; "Today we are going to start on an art project called Inside/Outside Boxes, which are small boxes that you will paint and



Figure 1. Exterior of a 3rd-grade boy's box.



Figure 2. Interior of 3rd-grade boy's box.



fill with colors and shapes. I would like you to make the outside of the box look like what you think people see about you. Inside the box, I would like you to use colors and shapes that show how you see yourself." I then showed my Inside/Outside box and explained that it was dark blue on the outside, because I am serious at work as a teacher; and pink on the inside—with a pink fish finger puppet—because I like happy and silly things. We then went into the computer lab to see and discuss a PowerPoint of other artists' boxes. Back in the classroom, before the children got to work, I asked them if their boxes would be like my example box. I was gratified to hear one child pipe up, "No." When I asked her why, she said, "Because everybody is different." I reinforced this child's response with the group, and at that point I thought to myself, "They understand." But I was about to see that transferring this open-ended idea to artwork that others could discern the meaning of wasn't very easy for the children.

Before the children worked with the art materials, they completed a worksheet to list ideas for how they would show on the outside of their boxes what people see about them. They also listed thoughts about how they would show in the insides of their boxes what they thought about themselves. We then provided a wide array of materials to the children to work with (such as watercolors, construction paper, glue, scissors, and bags of random collage papers from my studio). I also encouraged the children to bring things from home.

From the worksheet responses and the photos of the children's completed Inside/Outside boxes, it was evident that the children were not able to easily transfer their ideas on identity to their artwork in ways that others could easily interpret. For example, Child 1 wrote on his worksheet that people see that he is "funny, sweet, cute, smell good." And he wrote that he sees himself as "good, smell good, friendly, smart." On the outside of his box (see Figures 1 & 2) this boy used colorful, brightly painted shapes. Inside, he placed a toy figure, more painted shapes, colored marker lines, and collaged magazine shapes. Nothing about this child's imagery readily suggested what he had depicted with the words on his worksheet. The boy became mildly frustrated with the group during the discussion about his

Inside/Outside box, when none of us readily understood what the he had intended to communicate with his box, which is part of the process of inquiry.

Barrett's (1997) three critical inquiry question stems about art—What do I see? What is the artwork about? How do I know?—were the discussion points we tried to use with the children when they talked about artworks. For the group discussions, a child would get in front of the group with their work, and often we would only need to ask, "What do you see?" and the children were off and running—eager to have a chance to talk about what they saw in the artwork and what it meant. Some of the young students talked over one another, and some joked rather than give worthwhile interpretations of the piece, but such chaos demonstrated that the students were fully engaged. Once it settled down, we had an enlightening discussion with the group.

When we discussed Child 1's Inside/Outside box and none of us were able to discern what the boy had intended to express with the colors, shapes, and forms in and on his box, the boy told us that the top of the box showed a boy with a red cloud coming out of his mouth because he was laughing. He further explained that in the box he glued a paper skull to represent himself as being cool. The toy figure, he said, smelled good. I then realized the boy had tried to illustrate several of the ideas that he'd listed on his worksheet. Through the discussion, the group learned a good deal about his artwork, including what the imagery meant to the boy and how he had tried to transform his ideas into images. Our understanding of the boy's art deepened through the group's critical analysis of it. This was true with most of the children's boxes.

With Lesson 1, I had witnessed that there were many miscommunications between student artists and their peers as to the meaning of their boxes. I hoped that the mixed signals they got would impress upon the children that things are not always as they appear, and that people often see the same thing in different ways. In other words, I hoped that we were opening the children's minds to think critically by seeing in class that several alternative solutions to the problem were evident (Lampert, 2011a).

I hoped that the mixed signals they got would impress upon the children that **things are not always as they appear**, and that people often see the same thing in different ways.

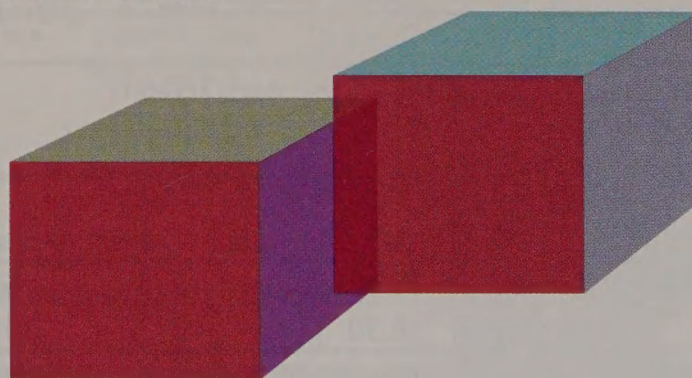
Implementing the Last Lesson— Design a School

For the last lesson the children were challenged to design their own ideal school, using recycled cardboard juice containers that they cut up and embellished with a wide variety of materials. As motivation to begin artmaking, the undergraduate students showed the children a PowerPoint of various unusual buildings. Question stems used in this PowerPoint session included: "Can you imagine a school made out of Legos... or a school that's a boat with a shark tank, and you have to cross a bridge to get to it...? What would you want your school to look like?"

One child created cardboard ramps on the outside of his school, and another used construction paper swirls on the roof of her model school (see Figure 3). After the artmaking, each child talked about the school they had designed. This lesson required that the children think for themselves about how to use the materials they had to construct a model of a school. By viewing all of the completed models, the children saw many ways to design a model of a school. This lesson provided the children with several opportunities to use critical thinking to solve an open-ended art problem. Each student solved the problem differently.



Figure 3. A 5th-grade girl designs a school.



Assessment of the Program

Most of the lessons in our program were completed over two sessions. Between the two sessions of Lesson 1, we took time out and asked the children to take a critical thinking test geared for elementary students (Bracken, Bai, Fithian, Lamprecht, Little, and Quek, 2003). The children were offered the incentive of free art supplies to take the test and all of them did so. The answers to the test were not known to the children or the undergraduates. At the end of the program, the children took the test again. The outcome of the *t*-test showed a statistically significant increase ($p = .020$) in the children's average

critical thinking skills scores over the course of the program (see Figures 4-6). This gain in critical thinking ability in the children occurred after just 12 weeks, and it paralleled the gains we observed in the children's ability to communicate their ideas with words and images (in contrast to chaos of Lesson 1). Several undergraduates noted in their final reflections that by the end of the program the children were far more comfortable with problem solving and analysis when it came to choosing and discussing images that were representations of their identities

Conclusions

Stewart and Walker (2005) recommend that art teachers move away from direct instruction to a model of inquiry, or indirect instruction, "guiding students in their own investigations... this often means designing strategies that will guide students to raise [and answer their own] questions" (p. 81).

In the after-school art program, we showed the children many images on a topic, and we asked the class what they saw in the images. During artmaking, we talked to each student about what they were making, and we discussed the children's artwork as a group.

I believe the positive outcome of this program was due to the inquiry-based lessons we used, the discussions about art, and the kindness the university students and I exhibited to the children in our art program. We modeled tolerance and respect for the students. We were able "to bear the vulnerability" (Lampert, 2011b, pg. 121) of the young artists as they worked on and discussed art, and perhaps that resulted in a safe place where the children could grow artistically, cognitively, and socially.

Nancy Lampert is Assistant Professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia. E-mail: nalamper@vcu.edu

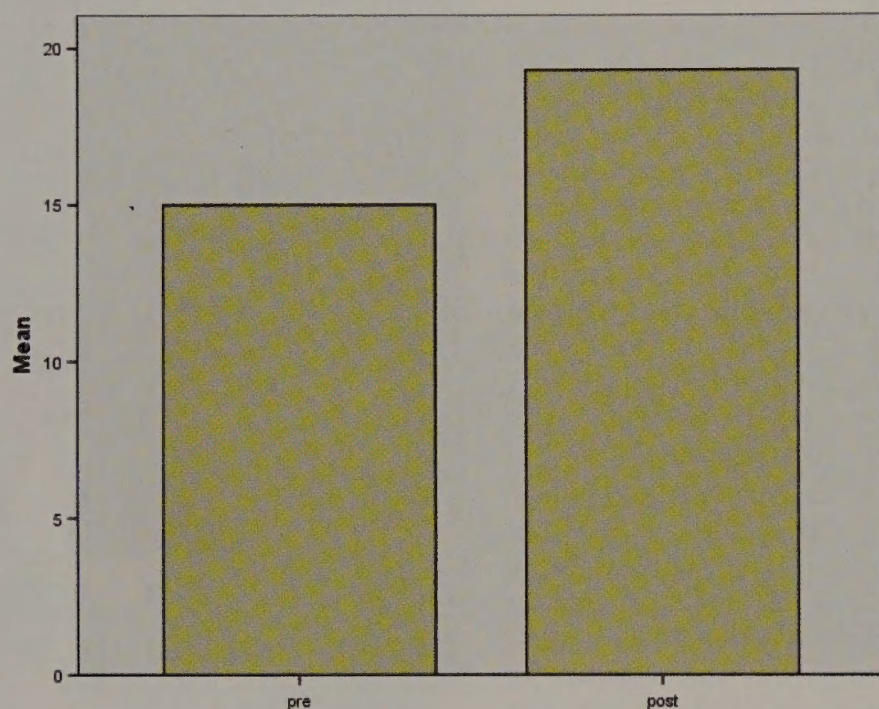


Figure 4. Pre/Post Test Graph.

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Pair 1	pre - post	-4.300	4.809	1.521	-7.740	-.860	-2.828	9	.020

Figure 5. Paired Samples Test.

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	pre	15.00	10	5.121	1.619
	post	19.30	10	6.601	2.087

Figure 6. Paired Samples Statistics.

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Artmaking possibilities are derived from children's fanart for fantasy television shows and anime/manga.

Enchanting Tales and Imagic Stories:

The Educational Benefits of Fanart Making

MARJORIE COHEE MANIFOLD

While waiting in the registration line for a popular manga/anime conference, I struck up a conversation with a teenage boy dressed as Alucard, a character from the popular manga series *Hellsing*.¹ He seemed pleased with my interest in his costume. "You have to make [the costume] from scratch in order for it to be authentic cosplay,"² he explained. "My aunt gave me her old red dress and I stayed up all night cutting and sewing it into this coat. I'd never done any sewing before, so I made lots of mistakes. Don't look at the seams inside," he giggled.

"Do you make other kinds of fanart?"³ I asked. "All the time!" he answered enthusiastically. "I've got one hanging over there." He pointed to a banner stretched across the entrance to a walkway lined on either side with hanging fanart images. The banner announced the area as "Fanart Alley."

Impressed by his passion for artmaking, I was curious about his art education. "What does your art teacher think of your work?" I asked. "She hates this stuff," he said, wrinkling his nose to describe his teacher's disapproval. "So, I don't take art class anymore."

It was not the first time I'd been reminded that many art teachers disapprove of students' predilection for reproducing images of their favorite characters from popular culture. While the observations of generalist educators (Irving, 2009; Scheld, 2012) and anecdotal studies have suggested that interests in popular stories can "turn non-reading pupils into readers" (Smith, 2005) and increase critical writing skills (Kell, 2009; Thomas 2006), many art teachers fail to recognize the educational merits of fanart, or artmaking that is inspired by, copies, or appropriates popular visual literatures. In an effort to reassure these art teachers of the value of fanart to

adolescents' aesthetic understanding, critical thinking, and art skill development, in this article I will describe how young fans engage meaningfully with art learning through story-play.

Studies of Art Play With Narrative

In an extensive series of studies conducted between 2003-2009 (Manifold, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2007, 2009a, 2009b), I sought to determine why adolescents and young adults were intensely drawn to become fans of particular stories over others, engaged in playful artmaking based on these favorite narratives, and participated in communities bound



Figure 1. Adolescent in cosplay as Alucard from *Hellsing*. Photo By M. C. Manifold.

together by their common affection for a story. I wondered what narrative/aesthetic themes attracted adolescents across cultures and what visual characteristics distinguished the art products that were created⁴ by these young people.

As data for these studies, dozens of young people between the ages of 14 and 24 who participated in a variety of artmaking activities related to their fascination with media literature were interviewed in-person or via e-mail. In addition, the interactions of hundreds of young people, including both males and females who came from many countries⁵ and cultural backgrounds, but shared interests in particular narratives, were observed in real and cyber spaces. Their blogs, LiveJournals, forum communications, and online art galleries were monitored, and their artistic creations were downloaded from

websites or photographed at film openings, book release parties, and six conferences held in the United States and Canada, which were specifically geared toward teens and older fans of popular stories. Data collected from these sources were coded to determine emergent themes, and analyzed according to content analysis procedures recommended by Corbin and Strauss (2007). My interpretations of the findings have informed the following discourse.

The Psychological Appeal of Stories

Not surprisingly, my investigations supported Wilson's (1974) assertion that young people are motivated to invent and illustrate imaginative "stories, which often feature characters from popular culture," in response to "unconscious needs and drives"

(p. 3). They also concur that adolescents are drawn to play with stories that address issues of self-identity, life in the local social community, and within the larger, globally connected world (Boyd, 2010; Campbell, 1972; Egan, 1998; Wilson, 1974). Universally, it is a personal resonance with *content* that draws individuals to embrace one story over another. Adolescents and young adults become fans of stories they intuitively or consciously recognize as profoundly relevant to their everyday lives as they are or as they wish them to be. Favorite stories address questions such as: "Who am I in the world? Whom and how should we love? What does it mean to be a hero? What is worthy of the sacrifice of my (or your) life?" Furthermore, adolescents and young adults embrace story characters that possess admirable personality traits, are challenged by life situations that resonate with the readers' sense of the world, and overcome these challenges with unexpected cleverness, strength, and courage.

Aesthetically sensual features are secondary, albeit absolutely necessary, to the story's appeal. Stories must be poetically written, combine still or moving images that delight the mind's eye, present astonishing actions, or introduce enigmatic characters that trigger desires to "possess their beauty" through imitation or improvisation (Erin M., personal communication, July 21, 2004). In short, textual and visual narratives that attracted attentions of adolescents and young adults were those that triggered emotional and aesthetic "WOW" factors (Jenkins, 2006).

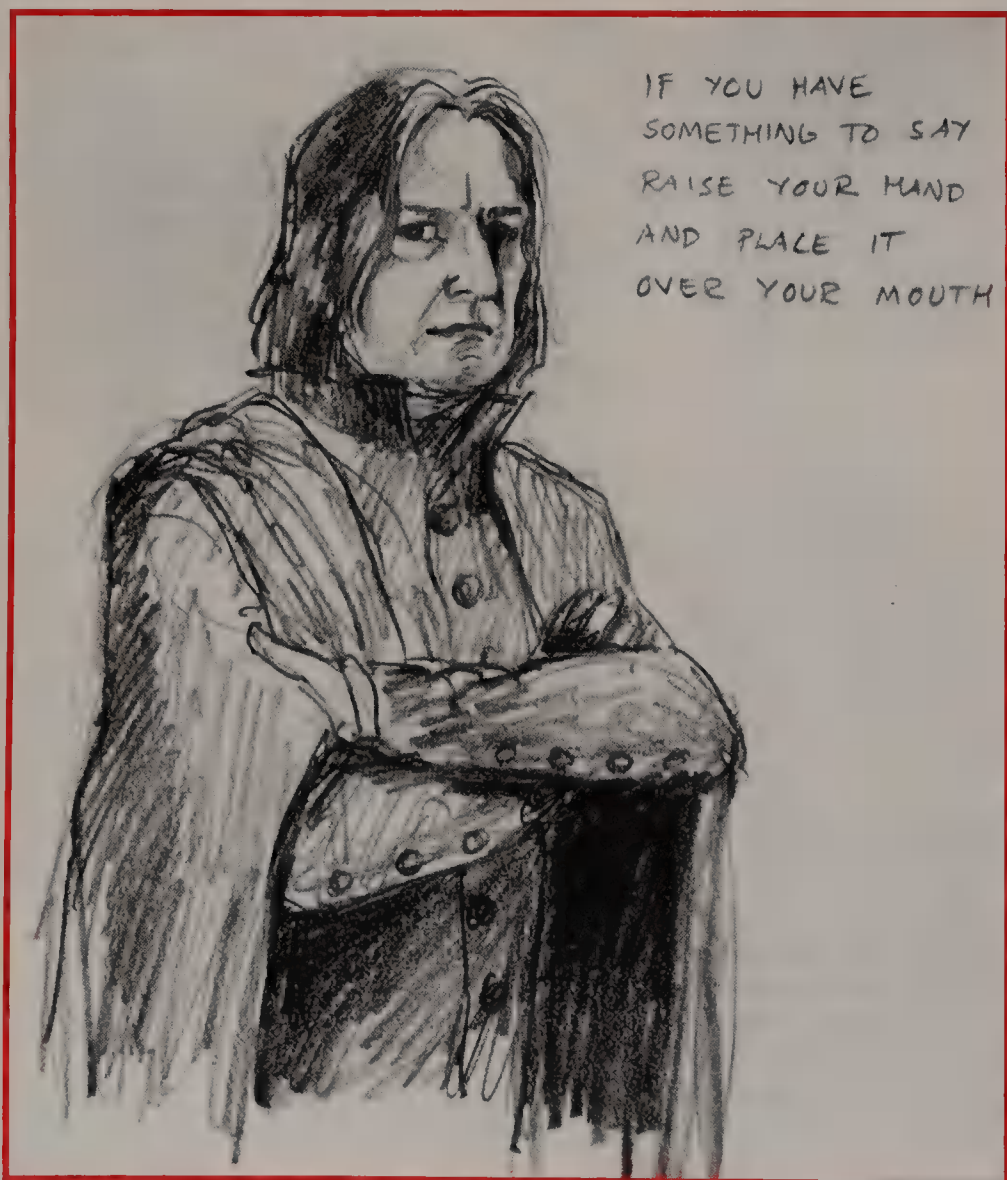


The Social Appeal of Story-Play

After discovering a personal affinity for a specific narrative, young fans seek out like-interested others as co-participants of play centered on the story phenomenon. Social play allows individual connections to characters and stories to be reinforced, modified, elaborated upon, and sustained over long stretches of time. Character actions and interactions within stories are discussed and debated by fan youth, who may spend many hours outside of school mentally cataloguing details associated with their favorite characters and stories and collaboratively unraveling the intricate nuances of character behaviors and motivations.

Adolescents' obsessions with extremes of human achievement and qualities and preoccupation with heroes and heroic achievements or "human qualities of transcendent degree" (Egan, 1998, p. 90) are satisfied by stories that present evidence of a "hero's journey" (Campbell, 1972), insofar as protagonists are challenged to exert extreme physical or psychological efforts and undergo tests of will and moral character in order to achieve transcendence. Yet, classical heroes may be considered *uninteresting* if they are presented as socially correct individuals driven to take risks only when no other viable options are open to them. Such heroes are perceived as boring in comparison to villains who are clever (Figure 2), struggle with complex impulses, and act as aggressive problem solvers. Thus, in comparison with heroes whose role is to uphold or restore an ordered society, villains present bold individuals who dare to upset the creativity-stifling status quo. Villains also may provide insights into the psychologies of "Others" whose enigmatic internal motivations and objectives challenge predictable trajectories of ordinary lives.

An example of layered and torturously complex but compelling psychology is exemplified by Professor Severus Snape, a central character of the *Harry Potter* series (Figures 3 & 4). Throughout the saga, protagonists Harry and his friends experience Snape as inexplicably cruel and are suspicious of his loyalties; yet, in a concluding episode, Snape's ultimate self-sacrifice proves him brave and noble. Likewise, in narratives of non-normative characters such as aliens, vampires, thieves, or pirates, fans may explore a range of issues regarding the human condition, from questions of free will versus



top

Figure 2. Portrait of James Potter, by Stefanie R. DiCroce, (2004). Graphite with Photoshop 6.0. DiCroce writes, "James is my favorite character. He is brilliant, mischievous, brave, but also human—capable of cruelty, insecurity, and carelessness." <http://elfwood.lysator.liu.se/fanq/p/r/prongsphile/zhamay2.jpg.html>

bottom

Figure 3. *Attitude*, by Johanna Isojarvenpaa (2004). Pencil on paper. Johanna writes, "If the essence of Snape was just to be feared, he wouldn't be so beloved." www.elfwood.com/~ohan2/Attitude.3487917.html

destiny to the relativity of ethical choices or “the contingent and fleeting construction of gender and sexuality” (Meecham, 2013, p. 86) (Figure 5).

Through story-play, fan artists come to recognize ambiguities in assumptive notions of good and evil. Tragic figures may be set in lush, sensually beautiful scenes that contradict the character’s internal anguish (Figure 6). Yet, more frequently, both protagonists and antagonists are presented with lighthearted humor. Lack of sobriety does not render such representations frivolous. That fanart works include a significant number of superficial or trivial images (Figure 7) along with exemplars depicting deep sadness reiterates adolescents’ and young adults’ intuitive awareness “that some things are really important, others not; and that the two... are most oddly jumbled in everyday affairs” (quote attributed to Christopher Morley in Telesco, 2001, p. 189).

The internal motivations and external circumstances of archetypal figures, who act in contexts of unfamiliar cultural settings, are intriguing to naturally curious adolescents. In order to unravel the meaning of other-cultural narratives, fan youth must be open to pantheons of unfamiliar archetypes and consider the “validity of a different worldview” (Ben D., personal communication, August 2, 2006). Exploring ideas about the motivations of characters through artistic reenactments makes the *doing* of fanart making a form of play. A sense of membership and belonging is animated by group play of this sort, which “can spark a feedback loop in which [individual] autonomy and competence improve”; furthermore, “as the groups ability to learn and work together gets stronger, it attracts more participants” (Shirky, 2010, p. 103). Thus, play with popular stories increases the size and diversity of the community that can access knowledge, exchange differing worldviews, debate critical ideas, engage in aesthetic explorations, and improvise upon an original narrative.

This feedback loop also functions to assist adolescents’ development as skillful artists. By copying images of beloved sources, newcomers to a fandom attune their skills and adjust their imagic ideas to comply with the aesthetic canon of a fandom. Within the context of a fandom, the next stage of growth involves collaborative interaction with other fanartists. Each participant is self-motivated to improve his or her work in direct proportion to the work of others of the group so the integrity of the entire ensemble of players (artists, writers, and performers) is maintained.



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Figure 4. *Another Day of Teaching in the Life of Severus Snape*, by Erin J. Kruk (2002). Digital image done in Photoshop. www.elfwood.com/~erinjean2/Another-Day-of-Teaching-in-the-Life-of-Severus-Snape.3456994.html

bottom

Figure 5. Warrior woman cosplay by a teenaged girl. The character projects an image of independence and strength that defies gendered stereotyping. Photo by M. C. Manifold (2005).

For the fan youth, copying is... a mindful exploration of relationships among visual elements, gesture, form, and meaning.

Thus, collaborative groups of fanartists, as “communities of practice,” (Wenger, 1999) grow together in knowledge of the subject matter and skill in crafting *new* works based on the fan subject (Manifold, 2004).

Art teachers may perceive work at the early stages of fanart development as mindless or addictive copying, for students will resist exploring broader canons of art until they have absorbed the essence of a beloved character by mastering the technique of drawing this form (Sennett, 2009). For the fan youth, copying is not only a strategy for learning artistic technique, but also a mindful exploration of relationships among visual elements, gesture, form, and meaning. Eventually, when a student feels acceptance of her need to associate with a particular narrative subject and is encouraged by her ability to render a competent representation of it, she may voluntarily seek knowledge about additional intricacies of proportion, perspective, drawing figures in movement, backgrounds, or aspects of good composition. This knowledge expands the fanartist’s repertoire of artmaking skills and contributes toward an ultimate goal of gaining recognition among fellow fans, not only as an excellent portrayer of the source works, but as re-interpreter of the work.



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Figure 6. *To Meet the End*, by Erin McChesney (aka Erithe) (2003). Digital art. Erithe writes, “[A] Queen of a land of demonic sorcery... used dark magic to break [this character], stealing that part of him that held his conscience and knew how to love. She showed him the beauty of his soul, and then she destroyed it. Thus was born Cestus, who is really, really, really evil.” <http://erithe.deviantart.com/gallery/611402#/d13jsf>

bottom

Figure 7. *Naruto Sitting on My Fridge Eating Spaghetti*, by Julia (aka moriendo-renascor) (2012). Color drawing image and Adobe Photoshop CS4 Windows. <http://moriendo-renascor.deviantart.com/gallery/?offset=0#/d58wgky>





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Figure 8. Cosplay of Jibrille, Michael, Alexiel, Sevothurte, and Zaplkiel (characters from *Angel Sanctuary*, 1995–2001, a manga series by Kaoki Yuki) by teenagers at Animé Expo 2005. The cosplay pose or tableau serves as a scenic unit. Photo by M. C. Manifold (2005).

bottom

Figure 9. *Chapter Panel—Intro*, by Erin McChesney (aka Erithe), 2003. A panel of images tell of simultaneously occurring events in ethereal and real worlds. Angels sleep on either side, while in another (center) realm, a fight between conflicting elements of good and evil is about to begin. <http://erithe.deviantart.com/gallery/611246?offset=24#/d10e25>

Visual Characteristics of Fanart

Nearly every style of fanart is characterized by a specific system of compositional and visual convention (Carrier, 2000; Eisner, 1996; Levi, 1998; McCloud, 1994; Toku, 2001). These conventions serve as systems of rules that clearly define the structural parameters of a particular genre of visual narrative. Common features to these genres are uses of conceptual frames or scenic units, text, and realistic fantastica. Conceptual frames capture and compose important features of a phenomenon in ways that communicate the importance of individual elements and reveal relationships among elements. Whereas film or cinema and literary works allow background details and subplots of stories and the psychological states of characters to be revealed over time, visual art must capture the essence of all these features at once within a single frame (Figure 8). Scenic units organize sequences of frames in time and special sequences (i.e., in chronological, concurrent, or nonlinear time, or through inner and outer spaces from thought to action). Thus, conceptual frames and scenic units focus viewers' attentions, pique curiosity, and cue the viewer to how a story is to be explicitly or implicitly read. Frames need not be literal (Stephens, 1998, p. 18). They may imply metaphysical states, describe psychological moods, or highlight the exact moment of a story when a singular event or choice of action preordains a particular conclusion. Likewise, scenic units may inform the viewer of events that are occurring simultaneously in differing locations or internally as well as externally (Figure 9).

The conventional element of text may manifest as words incorporated in images or balloons attached to figures and frames in manga or comics (Carrier, 2000; Eisner, 1996; McCloud, 1994; Toku, 2001), be spoken in film or video (Stephens, 1998), appear as titles accompanying descriptions, be presented by lyrics or tonal qualities of music, or be implied in dream-like metaphorical evocations (Manifold, 2005). The element of realistic fantastica implies an imitation of realism applied to the impossible. This realism may refer to either the closeness of a copy to its referenced source

The appropriation of popular stories by adolescents and young adults highlights a powerful interrelationship of narrativism and visual art.

or (more commonly) to the believability of impossible form or movement—for example, a plausibly realistic presentation of a centaur or a shape-shifting transformation. Realistic fantastica⁶ also may be juxtaposed with psychological realism, highlighting tensions between physical and psychic realms. In any case, realistic fantastica is a device that “makes obvious that the... concern is not useful information about the external world, but the inner processes taking place in an individual” (Bettelheim, 1976, p. 25).

Conceptualizing Fanart in Art Education

Adolescents and young adults who have grown up in a milieu of interactive information technologies do not see commercially produced stories as the uncontested intellectual property of their original authors.⁷ Rather, these stories are seen as communal resources intended to fuel private fantasies, be appropriated as objects of play, and serve as media for artistic manipulations. Fanartist and fan-fiction writer, Heather, explained this in the context of her experience as a *Twilight* fan. “We rarely write in Stephanie Mayer’s [the author’s] world. We take her characters and put them in our own imagined worlds. It’s the ultimate ‘what if’” (Personal communication, April 20, 2011).

An art education curriculum relevant to adolescents and young adult students would honor quests for meaning through

play with story. Attention might be given to visual systems of various narrativist genres as authentic art *forms*, while popular stories and their characters might be understood as art media and collaborative play with narrative might be embraced as a process of artmaking. Each student might select characteristics of a favorite archetypal character, set the character in hypothetical but ontologically relevant situations, and imagine him or her in interaction with the fictive creations of other students. Students would need to consider an appropriate aesthetic genre for conveying this narrative scenario, and provide a critical rationale for why this stylistic tradition might be more appropriate than another. How might a single frame or scenic element of the story be structured so as to convey the sense of the story? How might complexly nuanced interactions be visually conveyed? How might the narrative visually translate across language barriers, or be presented in ways that could be sympathetically understood by those who hold vastly differing worldviews? These projects might be collaborations of students within a classroom or—with the aid of interactive communication technologies—with peers in other real or cyber classrooms throughout the world.

Critiques of these works would attend to skillful and appropriate uses of elements and principles of design within scenic frames and as appropriate to generic conventions. Criteria of excellence would include issues of craftsmanship, along with coherence and eloquence

of the story, and the degree to which it allegorically or metaphorically applies to real-life issues and concerns. Thus, story-art critiques might bear close resemblance to critiques of film or literary sequences. This should not be seen as diluting the focus of art education from visual to literary products, but should be recognized as an enrichment of art education by allowing a flow of influences across disciplinary boundaries of sensual experiences.

Art educators, who are most comfortable directing youth to think visually rather than linguistically, might find inclusion of narrativist art forms in their curriculum (and particularly the encouragement of fanart-making practices) disconcerting. Yet, the appropriation of popular stories by adolescents and young adults highlights a powerful interrelationship of narrativism and visual art. Whether attributes of story-play are openly invited into the art room or surreptitiously appear in artworks that otherwise comply with dictates of a traditional art curriculum,⁸ the dynamic phenomenon of adolescents’ fascination and engagement with story through fanart seems entrenched and pervasive, and presents an unfolding landscape of how youth are coming to see themselves and interact with others in the 21st century.

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ENDNOTES

¹ A ten-volume series written by Kouta Hirano (1997-2009), published by Shoēn Gahosha and distributed in the United States by Dark Horse Comics.

² Cosplay, a portmanteau of costume and play, is the practice of dressing as one’s favorite character from popular culture. This participatory activity may have originated with fans of Star Trek during the 1960s, but became

famous among fans of manga and anime in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

³ Fanart is any artistic product created in homage to, adapted from, inspired by, or copied from popular cultural phenomena.

⁴ Questions regarding how young people learned to create art in the context of fandom have been addressed in other publications of this study.

⁵ Data were collected from fans living in 27 countries.

⁶ Realistic fantastica takes inspiration from the artistic traditions of theatrical and cinematic special effects (SFX).

⁷ There is no intention to gloss over the importance of teaching about what constitutes plagiarism of intellectual property and reinforcing standards of Fair Use in the classroom. Within fandom communities, information

about legalities of Fair Use are shared and generally practiced. To find out more about these regulations, see www.umuc.edu/library/libhow/copyright.cfm

⁸ Wilson (2008) has defined the intersection of students’ interests in popular culture and teacher directed art instruction as a “third-site pedagogy.”

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Young children and older adults collaborate on a book project, bridging the gap across generations.

Picture Pals:

An Intergenerational Service-Learning Art Project

SUSAN WHITELAND

Individuals engaging in recreational pursuits, education, work environments, and many other institutional settings are likely to be separated by age. This common practice is often considered an optimal way to facilitate programs. However, the separation of age groups has created societal consequences. It has encouraged a fear of aging and promoted stereotypes. Age segregation sets the stage for ageism to flourish (Kelchner, 2000). Ageism is the result of prejudicial thinking. It is defined as the discrimination against a particular age group most often thought of in relation to older adults (Ageism, n.d.). Ageism is the result of older adults and young people not understanding one another (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2006).

Intergenerational programs have the capacity to bridge the ages. Interaction among older adults and young people builds relationships and creates awareness of the characteristics and values associated with another generation (Brabazon & Disch, 1997). When intergenerational programs are coupled with visual arts activities, participants often recognize personal attributes that they hold in common (Grosbstich, 2011, LaPorte, 1998; Lawton, 2004; and Tapley, 2004).

Visual arts activities can be socially transforming by creating a context for building empathy and understanding among age groups. In LaPorte's (1998) study age-related stereotypes were reduced and a sense of community was established through collage making, sharing of personal stories, and discussions about relevant artwork. Grosbstich's (2011) study linked senior centers, teaching artists, and schools to find that the older adults and young people had a better understanding of each other after their collaboration through the Arts. Lawton's (2004) study indicated that older adults and

young people changed their way of thinking as a result of a bookmaking project. In her study, participants from 14 to 82 years old combined narratives of life experiences and illustrations. The experience positively impacted the perceptions that older adults and young people had of one another (Lawton, 2004). In another study, cognitively disabled older adults and university students in an artmaking memory project found a common denominator for meaningful engagement through the visual arts (Tapley, 2004). These studies illustrate the community connections and empathy for others that can be engendered through visual arts projects.

Understanding difference and being socially sensitive to others are encouraged as part of a well-rounded education. Higher education for the 21st century has been charged to develop students' civic responsibility and community engagement (Felten & Clayton, 2011). These attributes may be fostered through an awareness of differing perspectives, teamwork, and critical thinking. Intergenerational art programs have the capacity to help meet this



Preservice students hang children's artwork to dry. Later, the pictures were included in a collaborative book.

Artstories, the Picture Pals collaborative book, was instrumental in broadening the understanding of the older adults', university students', and young children's perceptions of one another.

academic challenge. They have been shown to integrate art and community life. A landmark study, the Owatonna Art project, is one of the earliest reported areas of research that points to the integration of art and community life. The purpose of the project was to investigate how art functions in a community. The study promoted art curriculum in the local schools that responded to community needs (Ziegfeld, 1940).

In the climate of today's emphasis on accountability and social responsibility, the problem exists for many educators in knowing how to facilitate meaningful learning experiences that are socially relevant, academically rigorous, and personally fulfilling for their students. Utilizing a service-learning pedagogy may be the answer. Service learning is a pedagogical tool that encourages community service, academic study, problem solving, and reflection for informed functioning in a democratic society (Benson & Harkavy, 2003). Service learning within the context of a socially relevant area such as age integration holds the potential for societal reconstruction.

Context

In this article I describe the service-learning experience that took place in an art education course designed for preservice art educators. The service-learning project, entitled Picture Pals, had components similar to the four studies mentioned previously (Grosbstich, 2011; LaPorte, 1998; Lawton, 2004; & Tapley, 2004). Like LaPorte's (1998) intergenerational study that used the art form of collage for making personal connections through art, the Picture Pals project provided older adults working with the assistance of university students the opportunity to create collages for sharing personal stories. The service-learning pedagogy of Picture Pals related to Grosbstich's (2011) study in that it linked university future art educators, an adult day care center, and a childcare center in collaboration. Similar in nature to Lawton's (2004) Artstories, the Picture Pals collaborative book, was instrumental in broadening the understanding of the older adults', university students', and young children's perceptions of one another. The Picture Pals experience

also related to Tapley's (2004) study that was designed for cognitively disabled older adults and university students.

Envisioning the Project

Art educator Christina Bain (2011) tells of organizing her university course by responding to a guiding question. I found myself doing the same for my visiting appointment as an assistant art educator teaching a course in principles of teaching art. I wondered: What kind of art education experience could I propose for my students that would enable them to engage in a socially relevant context such as age integration? What art activities could add to their understanding that art education is not bound by classroom walls? Studying the literature and my previous research (Whiteland, 2009, 2012) gave me clues on strategies that I might employ regarding the impact of visual arts for building a sense of community and negating stereotypical thinking helped me to envision the Picture Pals project.

Previously established requirements for the course were that pre-interns would be required to observe 30 hours of art instruction. With the approval of the department coordinator I arranged for the class to assist me in the delivery of art instruction for 10 of those observation hours. The learners for the art activities would be senior adults, preschool children, and my class as we initiated a collaborative endeavor that would offer a service to the community as well as provide a socially transformative learning environment for those involved.

Definition of Terms

Intergenerational is a term that describes the interaction and engagement of individuals of different age categories (Davis, 2007). *The Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, a scholarly publication that addresses research, practice, and policy perspectives of age integration, considers intergenerational activities to be those that link individuals with an age span difference of 20 years (Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, n.d.).

Several characteristics define service learning (Felten & Clayton, 2011). Learning combined with community purposes; shared objectives among partners; and reflection on experiences are joined to enhance a student's understanding. Service learning connects campus or academic study with community service, each strengthening the other.

Societal reconstruction is a pedagogical theory that advocates for a just and equitable society focused on the community good rather than individual gain. Within an educational system teaching is participatory, problem posing, situated, democratic, and activist. Students are involved in active inquiry rather than passivity and rote memorization (Barakett, Sacca, & Freedman, 2001).

Purpose

I determined that the purpose of the Picture Pals project would be to provide future art teachers with an artmaking experience that was community-based and addressed the issue of ageism. The artmaking component of the project was to create a collaborative and intergenerational book that related to the big idea of the passage of time. We became engaged in service learning with the prospect of social reconstruction. The Picture Pals project met a community need while advancing my university students' learning.

Participants

Participants in the Picture Pals project included me as a participant observer with five university students who were enrolled in the Principles of Teaching class at the university. The class was composed of four females and one male. Four of the students were Caucasian. One student was of Asian descent. All of the students were in their fourth year of their chosen major of art education. Four of the students were undergraduates with no teaching experience. One student was a graduate student completing her requirements for teaching certification.

The adults from the adult day care center with whom we interacted ranged from 26 to 87 years old. The adults experienced a variety of physical and cognitive limitations and were placed in the adult day care center on a regular basis. There was a mix of both male and female clients. Seven to nine clients chose to take part in the program with us, which afforded almost a one-to-one ratio of client to university student.

The second component of the Picture Pals project was made up of 4- and 5-year old students from the university campus preschool center. We met with two classes of children. Each class had about 20 students. The children volunteered to take part in our

art activities by selecting to come to three tables that we had set up on the playground during their recess.

Procedure

The Picture Pals project ran for 3 weeks. We met three times with the adult day care center and twice with the preschool center. Our regularly scheduled Tuesday/Thursday 3-hour block class was rescheduled to take place in the two different venues. The class alternately met at the adult day care one day and the childcare preschool for the following class meeting. Before our first meeting with the older and younger groups I shared with the university students what they may anticipate in working with the two diverse groups. I also instructed the students to reflect on their experiences by writing journal entries regarding their interaction with the children and older adults.

First Day at Adult Day Care Center

Our first day of meeting with the older adults was Valentine's Day. In honor of the day we lead an icebreaker game to help us get better acquainted. The future art educators sat beside the adults in a circle to share stories about what each remembered about their first girl- or boyfriend. The partners shared for a short time and then the university students were prompted to move to the next person sitting in the circle where they would again share about first loves and other objects of devotion. The exercise was designed to motivate the older adults to remember past events. The students and adults then paired together to create pop-up cards. The pop-up technique was later utilized to illustrate selected pages in children's books that would be exchanged between the adult day care clients and preschool children. During the artmaking experience the adults were also introduced to the artwork of Faith Ringgold

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and Carmen Lomas Garza, artists noted as depicting themselves as children in remembered childhood events.

The university students met a community need while presenting the art project to the senior adults. They provided companionship to the elders and shared with them a new learning experience through the manipulation of materials. Enriching opportunities such as the critical thinking that goes into artmaking has shown to enhance wellness and stimulate cognitive deficiencies (Cohen, 2006). Beyond the physical and mental attributes of the art activities for the benefits of the elders, the university students also began to build mutually satisfying relationships with the older adults by listening to their reminiscences of childhood memories. One gentleman recounted to his university partner how he remembered playing in the snow as a boy. Another client recalled with pride past days of being part of the construction crew of a local mall. Another client was prompted through questions to remember a time in her life when she tended the family garden. The reminiscence brought her a memory of cooking bacon, a sensory experience where she remembered the bacon sizzling and popping. In her time of reliving precious moments she broke out in song recalling the words to a favorite hymn. Her eyes brightened, her voice grew strong. The singing was contagious for several others at the table joined her in singing "Amazing Grace."

Second Day of the Project

The second day of the project brought the university students to the childcare center. We set up stations with a variety of art activities in which the children could engage. One station was equipped with scented markers, a second station had various shaped sponges and foam cutouts for stamping purposes. For the third station brightly colored tubs of watercolor with assorted brushes and paper sat ready for exploration. At a given signal almost 40 4- and 5-year olds exuberantly scattered across the playground. The picnic tables where the art activities were arranged quickly filled to capacity as smiling youngsters excitedly took their places, eager to play with the art materials. At the marker station one of the university students introduced the concept of the children making artwork for older friends. She showed the young artists pictures of the adult day care clients. We also showed the children the collaborative books that the older adults had begun and explained that the children's pictures would



An adult day care client and a preservice student work together to create a pop-up card.



A preservice student leads preschool children in reflecting on their artwork.



A preservice student reminds preschool children that their chalk pictures will be part of an art exchange with an older adult.



With a little help from a preservice student, preschoolers prepare shaving cream prints to serve as covers for a collaborative book project.

be added as another page in the book if they chose to become a picture pal with an older friend. The children happily complied. They created pictures to keep and pictures to share. I encouraged the children to draw pictures of things that they did or saw on a daily basis in keeping with the big idea of the book—the passage of time. The older adult's first page depicted yesterday or time in the past. The second page of the book depicted the present time of today. The children drew, stamped, and painted pictures of buses, flowers, rainbows, princesses, bugs, and other images that came to mind. One of the university students shared artwork from Carmen Lomas Garza just as we did with the older adult learners. I also pointed out how Andy Warhol became famous for painting a soup can from his everyday life.

Back at the Adult Day Care

The second day with the adult day care clients was one of animation and excitement. We again arrived on a holiday of celebration. The center was observing Mardi Gras and invited the university students to take part in games following our time of artmaking. The art activity for the day involved assisting the older adults in creating a collage page for the collaborative book. The collage was designed to depict a message that the older adult desired to share with the children at the childcare center. The collages depicted important values that the older adults felt were significant to pass along to the

preschool children. Some of the older adults' advice was practical in nature, such as "wash your hands," while other of the sages' comments included tips for living happy lives, such as "enjoy nature," "go to church," or "be happy." The older adults were introduced to the photomontage techniques of Romare Bearden and David Hockney for inspiration in creating their collages from magazine cutouts.

Fourth Day of the Project

The fourth day of the project brought the university students back to the childcare center. This day the university students prepared a shaving cream marbling experience at two of the stations for the collaborative book's cover. At a third station children were encouraged to draw with colored chalk dipped in liquid starch. Both of the artmaking activities capitalized on sensory expressions. While the children created prints with the shaving cream foam and watercolor drips, they were shown a picture of Jackson Pollock creating an action painting. His image of *Violet Mist* was also shown to the children, suggesting a commonality between Pollock's work and that of the child. The illustration of energy seemed to be apparent in both art forms. The big idea in the chalk painting was for the children to illustrate the future. The children were encouraged to depict what they envisioned themselves as being when they grew older. A picture of Yuka from the Grandmother Series by Miwa Yanagi

was shown to the children. The image is of Yanagi dressed to look like a grandmother in the sidecar of a motorcycle racing down the highway.

At the conclusion of the art period the collaborative books were shared with the children so that they could better understand the back and forth exchange aspect of the experience that was being portrayed in the book. Each of the university students had assembled one of the books using the artwork from the older and younger populations with whom they had personally worked. Along with the pop-up section and the collaged messages from the older adults the books also contained photo images of the older adults and the children working with the art materials that the university students had supplied.

As the children and older adults became familiar with one another through the bookmaking exchange it became apparent that they felt empathy for one another. One university student reported that a child was concerned about the older adults not having decorations for their place of meeting. The child attempted to rectify the situation by informing the university student that he had made six balls from compressed wet sand to share with his older friends. The older adults seemed to mirror concern for the children when they participated in sending meaningful messages to the children.

Final Meeting

The final meeting at the adult day care was a bit anticlimactic. Many of the clients that our class had worked with were not there. On the last day we shared the completed books with the clients who were present and asked the director to pass the books to the families of those clients who were represented in the book. The director was delighted with the books and said that the families would really appreciate them.

As a concluding art activity I brought some Model Magic, a soft modeling compound, for the clients to manipulate. A new client that I had not seen before participated with the university students in the art experience. One of the university students later wrote in her journal:

Although I tried to engage the man sitting next to me, he seemed content to just feel the material and stack different colors on top of one another. I didn't think he was especially attached to the project, but he was the one who really wanted to be sure his name was on his project so he would know which one to take home. Seeing that he had an opportunity to make something and take pride in it was touching. (C. Z. Luciano, personal communication, February 28, 2012)

Reflections on the Experience

The university student's recognition of what the artmaking meant to one of the clients at the adult day care center affirms some of the service learning that took place for her. In another journal entry the student made the following observations:

I don't think I'm a natural with preschool age children. I feel like a level being placed on a wall. I move back and forth like the bubble until I find the right way to interact with the children. Usually what I find is that I start by assuming that they are naïve little kids, but I'm often surprised to discover how smart and attentive they are. Like the level, I have to adjust my expectations for the better and credit young children with more intelligence and autonomy, despite the fact that they are such tiny little people! (C. Z. Luciano, personal communication, February 16, 2012)



left

Pop-up books recorded memories from the past. Creating the books engendered intergenerational relationships in the present.

below

The Picture Pals book project combined children's art and photos with older adults' remembrances and handiwork. The books compiled by university art education students were illustrative of a meaningful service-learning experience.



The student's reflection gives credence to the value of service learning. It seems unlikely that such a conclusion could be reached without the active personal involvement characteristic of service learning.

Conclusion

I am reminded of what one of the university students said at the conclusion of the Picture Pals project. He was standing outside of the adult day care center and had just learned that one of the clients who he had apparently come to admire had lost a loved one that was very close. The loved one was a

stuffed animal. The university student in exasperation said, "That really sucks!" (T. Brooks, personal communication, February 28, 2012). The university student was visibly upset and empathetic that the older gentleman had lost something that was meaningful to him. The university student's comment adds validity to the idea that understanding and compassion for others can be fostered through intergenerational artmaking experiences.

Service learning is characterized as a powerful vehicle for learning and social change and is often difficult to implement effectively (Felten & Clayton, 2011). For

the university students who were involved in the Picture Pals project, service learning through art experiences seemed to effectively contribute toward making a socially relevant impact on a personal level with the potential for transforming prejudicial attitudes among the generations.

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“The information and tips that I received from Ask A Fellow had a defining impact on my research paper and presentation. The responses I received were insightful and directive. I was given advice about using a book that turned out to be one of the most important sources I used. A variety of people volunteered their time to meet my needs as a researcher and this was really incredible. My final product, a presentation to the Ontario Council of Exceptional Children's annual conference in Niagara Falls, was a reflection of the input I received through the Ask A Fellow program. I still intend to present this work to more teachers here in Ontario. As a Canadian, I felt especially honoured to be offered the support of American educators. It was a privilege to have the opportunity to use the ASK A FELLOW program.

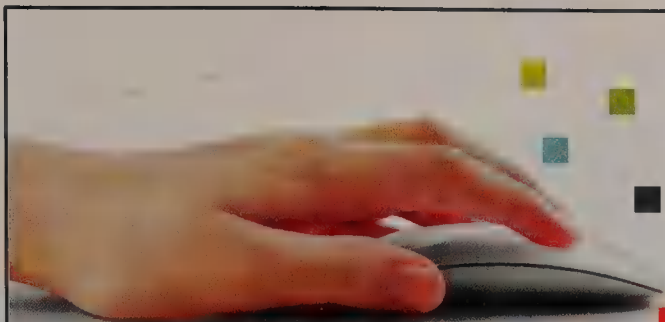
The other day I was reflecting on my research project for the Ontario Secondary School Teacher's Federation (OSSTF). I recognized that the NAEA's Ask A Fellow service really was the gateway that allowed me to successfully engage in and complete that work. Your member Fellows identified key resources and generously shared their time and expertise. The service was pivotal to the success of my visual arts research project. **I would encourage others in visual arts education to utilize this important NAEA resource.**”

—Natalie Mathews, Secondary School Visual Arts Special Education Teacher, West Credit Secondary School, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

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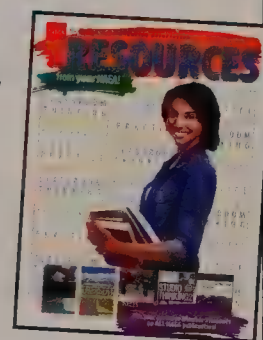
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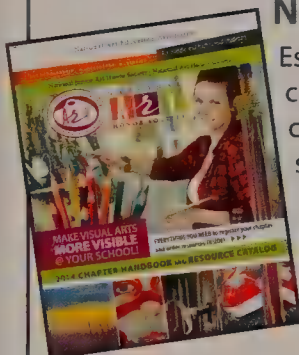


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Discussing various perspectives of artists' influences and experiences can develop students' divergent thinking skills.

Cultivating DIVERGENT Thinking: CONCEPTUALIZATION a

CHRISTINA CHIN

Fostering students' divergent thinking skills is integral to developing creativity (Guilford, 1967; Nijstad, De Dreu, Rietzschel, & Bass, 2010), and the Arts are a ripe forum for this (Robinson, 2008). In contrast to convergent thinking, which focuses in on one "correct" conclusion, divergent thinking instead generates a multitude of connections, associations, and possibilities in relation to a topic (Chermahini & Hommel, 2012; Guilford, 1967; Kleibeuker, De Dreu, & Crone, 2013; Nijstad et al., 2010; Nusbaum & Silvia, 2011). Divergent thinking entails seeing concepts and ideas from a variety of perspectives, through diverse interpretations, and seeking multiple pathways and solutions to a question or problem (Robinson, 2008). How can art educators actively develop divergent thinking strategies with their students? This article highlights an elementary school art teacher's (Anna¹) practices that consistently model how divergent thinking can be cultivated by integrating the conceptualization process as a critical component of students' artmaking practice.

The curriculum in which Anna's classes participated capitalized on strategies that promoted divergent thinking through its emphasis on conceptualization prior to physical creation of artworks. Each of her lessons focused on a contemporary artist for inspiration. The conceptualization process in which Anna engaged students entailed: (1) investigation of each artist's contextual influences and experiences in his/her conceptualization process as springboards for ideation; (2) fluid discussion in an open and safe forum in which interpretation, speculation, building on ideas, and honoring multiple perspectives was encouraged; and (3) development of further connections and understandings about artists' contextual influences, experiences,

and conceptual inspiration through the envisioning and creation of students' own artworks, which drew on aspects of an artist's conceptualization process. In direct contrast to the banking style² (Freire, 1970/1993) and the positivist style³ (Giroux, 1981) of teaching so commonly employed within United States school systems (Robinson, 2008), Anna did not position herself as the purveyor of correct answers and undisputable facts. She instead emphasized that there was not one fixed, right solution, but rather multiple possibilities and perspectives that her students were active in generating. That is, divergent thinking was a strong learning strategy and objective in her art room.



a Critical Component of Artmaking

Overview of Anna's Lesson Format

Anna began each of her art lessons by introducing students to a contemporary artist through an on-screen presentation. The bulk of slides for each presentation contained an image archive revealing the works of the artist under study. Artists' works included contemporary pieces that varied in concept and media from artist to artist. The interspersed images, text, and/or Anna's narration accompanying each artwork explained key contextual influences that the artist drew upon in his or her creation of that piece, typically utilizing quotes from the artist to speak toward these ideas. During these presentations, students participated in dialogue with Anna and their classmates in regard to these artworks, using the artifacts and ideas of the artist as catalysts for their discussions.

Each presentation concluded with Anna verbally linking the artist's work to the art project the students would be working on in subsequent art sessions. Students' artworks drew on contextual facets similar to those that each artist employed in his or her own conceptualization and creation of artworks.

Approach to Artworks, Artists, and Artmaking: Conceptualization Forefronted

Anna brought a number of contemporary artists and their artworks into her art room for exploration within her curriculum. In the field of art education, a number of scholars have indicated that artworks can serve as sites of knowledge for exploration (e.g., Ballengee-Morris, 2008; Bastos, 2006; Dash, 2005; Desai,

2005; Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996; Klein, 2008; Knight, 2006). With artworks as the knowledge texts, artists are then one of the creators of this knowledge—a partial perspective of the world that is open to further interpretation. Artists' contextual influences and experiences, as frames of reference, become relevant areas for investigation.

In her presentation of each artist, Anna utilized each artist's compendium of artworks as the sites for investigation. She showed that an artist who created an artwork carries with him or her contextual experiences that often influenced their artworks. Anna's presentations showed how these artists' contexts shaped their interpretations of the world, as suggested through their artworks. As a part of students' conceptualization process for artmaking, Anna asked them to reflect on their own personal experiences and contextual influences, similar to the way the artist of inspiration did.

For example, painter James Lavadour let the natural elements in his surrounding landscape inspire his artwork. His pieces reflected his interpretations of his contextual experiences walking outdoors as a daily ritual. Second-graders were asked to respond to their surrounding environment and to paint their interpretations of it, following Lavadour's conceptualization approach.

After showing a series of photographs revealing Lavadour's surrounding mountainous landscapes from which he drew inspiration, interspersed with a series of his interpretations of them as rendered in layers of oil paint, Anna had students draw from their own surrounding local landscapes for

Anna asked them to **REFLECT ON THEIR OWN PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES**, similar to the way the artist of inspiration did.

inspiration, just as Lavadour had drawn from his. "I'm going to show you Illinois [this is where the students lived] because that's what I want you to think about," Anna announced. She flipped through a series of slides of Central Illinois landscapes. The last slide depicted a flat goldenrod parcel of farmland stretched wide beneath a clear blue sky. None of the images included mountainous areas, only flat horizons and blue sky, which was characteristic of the surrounding terrain in which the students lived. "Hey, that's right here!" one of the students pointed out enthusiastically as an image of the dry prairie flatland terrain surrounding the school flashed onto the screen.⁴ Anna chuckled in response, "I took that just down the street."

She was leading students to draw from their own surrounding landscapes, their own contextual experiences, just as Lavadour had pulled from his, and to use these experiences to spark their own diverse individual interpretations and creations. While it could be argued that students were led to think convergently about Lavadour's inspiration for his conceptualization process—honing in on his environmental context—this context was full of diversity in itself, and students' consideration of this context became a launching pad for multiple connections and relations to their own varied experiences of their environmental contexts. In other words, their considerations of Lavadour's contextual influences ultimately led to divergent thinking as they explored their own artmaking possibilities and drew from their own diverse contextual environments for inspiration in a manner similar to that of Lavadour.

Open Dialogue, Interpretation, and Speculation

Furthermore, in Anna's art room, knowledge was presented as interactive and dynamic. That is, there was no one, predetermined, fixed answer to questions, but rather the students were engaged in an active process of idea generation and interpretation. Divergent paths of thinking were encouraged through open dialogue, interpretation, speculation, and students building off of peers' ideas.

During each lesson in which an artist and his or her artwork was introduced, Anna created an open forum for dialogue that honored students' own interpretations and speculations about the artist and his or her work and contextual influences. Anna's supportive style and open acceptance of a diversity of responses set a safe environment for students to share and speculate. She had built such dialogues into her normal practice for lessons, thereby acclimating students to these types of safe and open forums for discussion.⁵ Furthermore, she encouraged *piggybacking*, the extension or development of a new idea from a previous suggestion (Tosin, 2006). She sometimes promoted piggybacking with a brief probing question or a simple rephrasing of a recently offered suggestion, and at other times by allowing students to freely continue building along a path of thinking without her intervention. This further augmented

discussions and understandings as speculations and interpretations abounded during students' explorations of the contextual influences and experiences that found their way into each artist's work, such as that of Kay WalkingStick.

For instance, 5th graders speculated about the potential meanings and emotional expression of the symbols woven throughout Kay WalkingStick's works. One of WalkingStick's diptychs glowed on the screen. The text accompanying it read, "This painting came at a time when Kay WalkingStick was grieving the sudden death of her husband of thirty years. She says that it is about the cascading nature of life and death." Anna circled her palm over the golden fan shape striped vertically by a translucent, earth-brown band on the left panel of the diptych. "A symbol is something that stands for something else. What do you think this is?" Anna pointed to the fan symbol.

"Is that an eye?" posited a boy.

Anna cocked her head to the left and stared a little longer at the image. "Everybody says that, and I'm beginning to see that." Her respectful consideration and acceptance of students' speculations—which further prompted her own speculations—ran contrary to the idea that there is only one "right" answer, and that the teacher is the sole possessor of this knowledge.

A girl interjected, "I think it may say, 'My husband has died, and now my heart is broken in half.'"

The girl next to her sat up straight and her eyes widened. "Ooo, yeah, there's a line through the middle. It's like two people broken in half." She raised her left hand like a cleaver and swiftly lowered it in a vertical line.

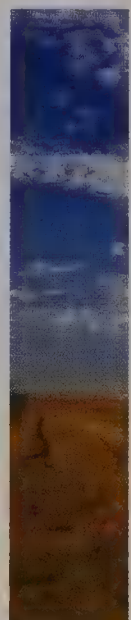
"Maybe she's been torn in half—not literally—but maybe she's been torn apart inside," commented a boy on the other side of the room.

As they piggybacked one idea off of another, students were explicitly considering the event of WalkingStick's husband's death as a contextual influence on her work. This strongly played into their interpretations of her work, and speculations thereof.

Anna honored all students' input with a nod and a smile. "She's using a metaphor. That means you show something, and it conveys something else." She was asking students to draw on their own connections, perceptions, and interpretations of the artwork displayed. Students were engaging strategies that exercised their "tolerance for ambiguity, reflection, and metaphorical thinking," which are considered prime indicators of creativity (Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland, & Palmer, 2009, p. 18).

Additionally, in Anna's 4th-grade classes students deliberated on the possible representations of Nora Naranjo-Morse's abstract ceramic sculptures. On the screen was an image of seven freestanding cylindrical sculptures in an assortment of yellow hues—mustard, to tan, to speckled ginger—each accented with painted black geometric designs. Abstract shapes topped their cylindrical bodies. "This one's called *Tribe*. Is there anything here that would make you think of a tribe?" asked Anna.

"It's a tribe because they all look like tools they would use—like a knife, like hairbrushes and something you would use to take fur off you."



Rather than promoting a search for one correct answer, **SPECULATION WAS ENCOURAGED ABOUT A VARIETY OF POSSIBILITIES** in terms of what each artist's communications and influences were in their creation of art.

"It represents all the different members of the tribe—and despite their different features, they all work together."

"What makes you think that they all work together?" questioned Anna.

"The designs."

"I see faces."

"Oh?" replied Anna, locking eyes with the last student.

He hopped from his seat, walked up to the screen, and touched each element that he interpreted as a facial feature on different sculptures as he called them out: "There's an eye. There's an eye. There's a nose."

Following on this personification, a girl inferred, "I think it's called *Tribe* because it's all about the people in the tribe, and their different personalities."

"That's what art makes us think about," proposed Anna. "We interpret things differently." Her words again encouraged their speculations, and the openness of interpretation, rather than fixed singular solutions. Students often built on each other's responses, sometimes embarked on a completely different path of thought, and Anna encouraged this free-flowing discussion. She opened the door to many potential responses, and refrained from boxing students into one particular answer or line of thinking.

The classes' focused attention on an investigation of each artist's contextual influences/experiences in relation to each one's artworks appeared to provide a forum ripe for students to challenge the idea of one fixed solution, and to explore the dynamic interactions of dialoguing as they built ideas off of each other's responses. Rather than promoting a search for one correct answer, speculation was encouraged about a variety of possibilities in terms of what each artist's communications and influences were in their creation of art. Furthermore, these dialogues with students underscored how the teacher was not positioned as the distributor of undisputed knowledge. She was exemplifying an alternative route to the positivist style of teaching frowned upon by Giroux (1981), and the banking style of education criticized by Freire (1970/1993). That is, she did not presume to deposit a set of unimpeachable facts, dates, titles, and so forth into students' brains to

garner their comprehension of an artist and his or her artworks. Instead, she encouraged the students to generate a diversity of understandings through their own connections and speculations as they related to each artist's contextual influences.

Familiarizing Young Students With Speculation and Alternative Perspectives

The atmosphere promoted by Anna's openness in the art room seemed to create an environment in which students did not hesitate to question what was presented and actively sought understandings outside of the information shown on screen. First- and 2nd-graders often interjected their inquiries during presentations. These young students' consistent flow of questions indicated their active engagement in a quest for information outside of that presented to them, and their comfort in posing questions to Anna. Furthermore, Anna guided her younger students to begin speculating and engaging alternative perspectives, thereby familiarizing them with processes fostering divergent thinking.

For example, Anna introduced 1st graders to sculptor Truman Lowe. Highlighting Lowe's creation of freestanding sculptural artworks, Anna's presentation illustrated how the artist referenced the effigy mounds in the Woodlands region that were created by his Ho Chunk ancestors, which often took the form of simplified animal shapes and profiles when viewed from above. In response to Lowe's artwork, 1st graders started with a preliminary exercise of creating clay sculptures that took the form of simplified animal shapes when viewed from above. This birds-eye perspective was capitalized upon in Lowe's work, and was novel to many of her students. Following this 3-D exploration and viewing these clay creatures "from above" to familiarize themselves with this novel perspective, students then drew topographical depictions of animals and landscapes from a birds-eye perspective. This was a perspective that referenced the topographical maps that located some of the Ho Chunk effigy mounds, which Anna showed in her presentation.

In lead up to the creation of their topographical drawings, Anna encouraged students to

speculate about the diversity of items that might one might see on the land from above, and how these items might be represented in a drawing from a birds-eye perspective. "What would you see if you were an eagle flying around above a river?" Anna asked the class as she looked out over their faces. She picked up a dry-erase marker, and drew on a whiteboard a large rectangle to represent a blank, landscape-oriented page.

"A thin line," replied a boy. Anna drew a wavy line horizontally across the center of the rectangle of paper on the whiteboard.

"And what if you were closer?" she inquired, asking the boy to further consider a slightly altered view from this bird's-eye perspective.

"A little wider?" he responded, spreading his palms apart in the air before him.

"Maybe a little wider," Anna echoed, as she added another wavy line parallel to the first line to indicate the two banks of a wider river.

"What else? We haven't talked about vegetation," Anna suggested.

"Trees!" called out a boy triumphantly.

"What would trees look like from the top?"

The students seemed to be stumped into silence. They were unfamiliar with this perspective, but Anna was offering them possibilities. She drew something that looked like a cloud with billowing tufts around its circumference. "How 'bout that?" she proposed as a question for their reflection. "What else?" She encouraged them to brainstorm freely, and did not condemn any suggestion. "Fish!" "Water!" "Turtles!" "Shark!" "Rocks!" "Eagle!" the students called out one after another, often overlapping. Anna drew rapidly on the board, depicting a potential representation of each suggestion.

As she drew each item, she reinforced with words, "A(n) [object being drawn] might look like that from the top." She did not say, in absolute terms, that an object "looks like that from the top," but rather left the possibilities open by preceding the phrase with the word, "might." The students continued to shout out their suggestions excitedly. They were being invited and encouraged to openly speculate and to entertain visions from an alternative perspective.

Open Pathways

Through these dialogues and exercises with her students, which focused on artworks and the exploration of multiple contemporary artists' contextual influences and experiences in their conceptualization of these artworks, Anna was inspiring students' diverse creative interpretations and speculations. Rather than focusing on the formal composition of each artist's work, Anna instead drew students' attention to how each artist generated the ideas and concepts that shaped their artistic creations. Her presentations underscored these artists' contexts as having important influence in the conceptualization of their art, and emphasized the "non-material" aspects of their artworks (as advocated by scholars such as Adejumo, 2002). She provided a safe forum for diverse interpretations, robust

speculation, and building off of each other's ideas. She engaged her young students in entertaining and respecting alternative perspectives. These interactions highlighted that the teacher is not the purveyor of undisputed knowledge, and that there is no one right answer, but rather multiple pathways and possibilities: Divergent thinking skills were being cultivated.

It is important to note that a significant portion (at least one-third) of class time for each lesson in Anna's curriculum, which typically spanned multiple class sessions, was dedicated to students viewing and responding to artists, their works, and their contextual influences; speculating and interpreting, asking questions, dialoguing, and piggy-backing ideas; and envisioning and imagining their own artworks by drawing on similar

contextual influences and experiences to that of an artist of inspiration for a lesson. These thought-engaging activities served as a preparation and prelude to physical construction of artworks. Beyond technical artistic skills, students' minds were prioritized as powerful tools for artistic creation, and divergent thinking skills were nurtured as critical to the artistic process.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Pseudonym used to retain individual's privacy. I had the privilege of observing Anna's curriculum in action throughout an entire academic school year. All IRB approvals were secured for this study.
- ² Like a banker, a teacher deposits unquestionable knowledge/facts into a student's mind.
- ³ Adherence to the idea that there is an unimpeachable set of knowable facts, which apply universally.
- ⁴ All student dialog/quotes are drawn from IRB-approved classroom observations and/or student interviews.
- ⁵ It is worth noting that Anna's practices brought to life the recommendations of Fletcher (2011) for fostering creative thinking in schools, including, but not limited to: "Encourage multiple explorations and ideas"; "Diversity and volume produce greater chances of creative outcomes"; "Allow students engaged in exploration of a topic a way to feel safe if they do fail"; and "Encourage generation of a number of solutions or ideas for a problem" (p. 40).



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The trickster-pedagogue is explored as a way to disrupt conventional thinking and incorporate humor into the classroom.

Humor in a Disruptive Pedagogy

Further Considerations for Art Educators

SHERI R. KLEIN

What's funny about art—and why should art educators care? Art historians, critics, and artists are now taking a closer look at art that generates a laugh. This has particular relevance for art educators who seek to direct student engagement in new and exciting areas and embrace artworks that generally fall outside of the art school curriculum. What follows is a discussion about the kinds, purposes, and value of humorous art, particularly contemporary art, for secondary and university level art education. Along these lines, I suggest that the art teacher as *trickster-pedagogue* is a necessary element for encouraging serious play and the disruption of conventional thinking consistent with a disruptive pedagogy. Who is a trickster pedagogue and what is expected of her or him? What kinds of humorous artworks can be incorporated into a disruptive pedagogy? Answers to these questions may provide some guidance for art educators seeking new pedagogical initiatives.

The Purpose and Value of a Humorous Art in a Disruptive Pedagogy

Leading humor researchers (Nilsen & Nilsen, 2000; Nilsen, 1993) acknowledge that the psychological function of humor is to test limits, that humor has an educational function within teaching and learning, and that the social function of humor is to promote social change. In this sense, humor can be described as subversive; that is, “it aims to disrupt our assumptions, emotions, patterns of thinking, ways of knowing and the world as we know it” (Klein, 2007, p. 132). Humor can play an important role in a “disruptive pedagogy”¹ that aims to assist students and teachers to “imagine [and re-imagine] themselves as [conscious] citizens within the world” (Becker, as cited in Kushins, 2006, para. 10) through engagements in art education.

Some commonly held assumptions and stereotypes about humor is that it lacks value and purpose for teaching and learning. Associations of humor with amusement and entertainment still strongly persist, yet, the predominance of well-established contemporary artists creating humorous artworks warrants further examination. Contemporary artists are using a wide variety of humor,

such as parody, satire, word play, irony, slapstick, physical exaggeration, and gag humor (Higgie, 2007; Klein, 2007; Molon & Rooks, 2005; Roukes, 2003). Central to many recent performance and video art is the use of self-effacing humor with a focus on human shortcomings and failures (Molon & Rooks, 2005). The growing numbers of art exhibitions that are devoted to humor suggest that it is beginning to be taken seriously by the art world:

Maira Kalman (Jewish Museum, 2011)

Terminal Jest: Dark Humor in Recent Art (travelling, 2011)

Humor, Wit and Satire (Delhi, India, 2011)

Kuniyoshi (Honolulu Academy of Arts, 2010)

Humor, Irony and Satire (Kemper Art Museum, 2010)

Disinhibition: Black Art and Blue Humor (Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, 2008)

Exploring Humor in Drawing (J. Paul Getty, 2008)

Situation Comedy (travelling exhibit, 2007)

Humor & Mischief in New Taiwanese Art (2007)

Funny Bones (Laguna, CA Art Museum, 2004)

Some of the many contemporary artists who explore social, political, and feminist issues with humor include Carl Beam, Tom Friedman, Guerilla Girls, Mark Jenkins, Debra Kass, Cary Liebowitz, Michael Hernandez de Luna, Liza Lou, Raymond Pettibon, Kay Rosen, Erika Rothenberg, Kay WalkingStick, and Kristina Cheryl Wong.² Their artworks suggest that humor is a means for social critique and the disruption of assumptions surrounding issues of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and beauty. Such artworks can result in “cognition-swaying, reason-faltering, thought-disarming, representation-lifting, world-deviating, object-in-determining, consciousness-interrupting, rationality-shaking” (Ball, 2007, p. 3).

Carl Beam, an Ojibway artist, believes that there is a “critical link between subversive practice, aesthetic [artistic] production, spiritual truth [and awareness], and [personal and] cultural wisdom” (as cited in Ryan, 1999, p. 3). Taking all of these into account, the expression and critical study of humor within visual arts education can play a key role in fostering both creative and social agency and an understanding as to how artists use “humorous strategies and effects as a form of critical engagement” (Molon & Rooks, 2005, p. 9).

Who is the Trickster Pedagogue?

A disruptive pedagogy may be described as a *trickster shift* that embraces “serious play”... “a radical shift in viewer perspective... [and] imagining and imaging alternative viewpoints” (Beam as cited in Ryan, 1999, p. 5). Historically, the trickster is a cross-cultural figure found in art and myth and in numerous oral and storytelling traditions who is described as a paradoxical figure and a curious mix of opposites: the sacred and ordinary and the “hero and fool” (Hyde, 1998, p. 9). Trickster is irrevocably a “risk taker, rule breaker, boundary tester, and creator transformer” (Ryan, 1999, p. 6) who understands “the potential for dynamic chaos” (Davis,



Figure 1. *Portrait of Coyote Trickster* (2011). Sheri Klein. Ink and colored pencil on paper. 6 x 8 in. Used with permission.

1991, para. 23) as a prerequisite for transformation. The trickster utilizes symbols, images, language, story, and humor, and it is she or he “who laughs at his [her] own pain and potential and the limitations of himself [herself] and his [her] culture” (Spinks, n.d., para. 5). Using self-effacing humor, parody, and satire, the trickster exposes “foolishness, greed, hatred, hypocrisy, and other shortcomings by making the object of mockery personal and familiar” (Molon & Rooks, 2005, p. 8) in ways that allow for addressing and re-addressing one’s limitations.

The trickster is also a “prophet, the poet, the visionary... the dream walker searching the edges of culture for new materials” who “plays the language of forms” (Spinks, n.d., para. 3). In particular, the coyote trickster is viewed with “magical powers of transformation, resurrection” that can envision new pathways and vistas. *Portrait of a Coyote Trickster* (Figure 1) represents a pedagogue who is able to create pathways for the personal transformation of others through connections with art and the comic spirit. The rainbow bridge represents a path toward new consciousness

through the illumination of dissonance that can be achieved through a trickster, or disruptive pedagogy.

Several models for trickster are identified by Spinks (n.d.) that may be useful in understanding the archetype of trickster-pedagogue: the *trickster as shaman* and the *trickster as artist*. Spinks argues that the trickster’s role is to disorient, to “disrupt normal perception” (para. 31), and to help others to “find an adaptive way to handle their own ‘cognitive dissonance’” (para. 33). Parallels between artist and shaman are drawn, as the trickster as shaman “speaks the human language of dreams and visions” and “represents, as Jung argues, the Shadow, both personal and collective, both individual and cultural” (para. 20). In doing so, “He [she] may assume an array of contradictory personae” (Ellis, 1993, p. 55) with the aim to “shake up” and “wake up” their community.

Trickster “is always the border creature who plays at the margins of self, symbol and culture” (Spinks, n.d., para. 3) and “reminds us that the cultural boundaries are arbitrary” (para. 5). The trickster-pedagogue is therefore a “constant reminder of the marginality and liminality of our personal experience” (para. 7) who explores the boundaries, margins, and edges or the “limen... a neutral zone between ideas, cultures, or territories” (Garoian, 1999, p. 40).

The trickster-pedagogue in a disruptive pedagogy “works in zone of contention” (Garoian, 1999, p. 43) and employs humor devices to facilitate dialogue, critique, and boundary crossing. In this zone, one may expect contradictions and “realizing that an accepted pattern [of thinking or knowing] has no necessity” (Ryan, 1999, p. 5). As humor disrupts accepted patterns of thinking, it becomes a catalyst for the creation of energized and illuminated curricular spaces where individual and collective experience and identities may be explored.

Who is a trickster pedagogue and what is expected of her or him? What kinds of humorous artworks can be incorporated into a disruptive pedagogy?

Within the limen zone, the role of the trickster-pedagogue is to facilitate others through these often difficult and paradoxical junctures, tensions, questions, and openings that often lie dormant along these pathways. As such, the trickster-pedagogue embodies qualities of improvisation as he or she facilitates *lostness*, or exploration that is necessary for discovery within the limen zone. The trickster-pedagogue is ultimately a change agent who necessitates the shaking up and waking up of his or her learning community through working with both conscious and unconscious beliefs and thought patterns.

The trickster-pedagogue will thus have a high tolerance for ambiguity and chaos, and value improvisation in the classroom. The trickster-pedagogue is truly a model for a creative way of being. In a curriculum that focuses on personal, familial, and social issues and themes, the trickster-pedagogue facilitates a classroom space where issues and feelings are explored in a way that moves students to create humorous "disruptions." It is, therefore, essential that the trickster-pedagogue believes that humor is a valuable source of knowledge and understanding, and both values and enjoys laughter.

Incorporating Humorous Contemporary Art in a Disruptive Pedagogy

There are many lessons to be drawn from artworks that speak to human failures, conflicts, foibles, loss, and disappointment through humor. Being a trickster-pedagogue requires an understanding of the varieties and purposes of humor, comic devices, and the subjects and themes used by contemporary artists as well as the necessary skills for creating liminal spaces within the classroom.³

Understanding humor, comic devices, themes, and subjects. Irony, satire, and dark humor appear to dominate many contemporary artworks, particularly Native American and First Nation artworks.⁴ Contemporary artists employ a number of humor devices or techniques (that are often used by sacred clowns), such as disconnect through juxtaposition of incongruous language, actions, and/or images (*irony*); exaggeration of behaviors or events; shock through visual, verbal, and auditory means; slapstick; and poking fun at social and political disasters, racial and ethnic stereotypes, human failings or shortcomings, and social and familial taboos (*satire*).

Looking to existing resources to better understand the role and purpose of varieties of humor may be helpful for teachers and students (see ART 21; Klein, 2007; Molon & Rooks, 2005; Nilsen & Nilsen, 2000; Roukes, 2003). The trickster-pedagogue may also look to performance art (see Garoian, 1999) as well

as to sequential art and graphic novels for storytelling techniques.

Questions-based inquiry. The following questions may guide inquiry into and discussion about humorous art and can certainly be modified depending on the age and grade level of the students:

- What comic device(s) does the artist use?
- How do these devices enable disruption?
- What kinds of assumptions are disrupted by humor?
- What kinds of humor are employed?
- How does image, text, location of artwork, media, and so on work together to create dissonance?
- How has the artist been or not been successful at creating a disruption through humor?
- Does the work serve as form of activism, and if so, how?
- What personal, art, cultural, and/or social myths are explored through humor?
- What trickster themes are employed (ex: greed, failure, oppression, power and control, beauty, sexuality, etc.)?

The art of Michael Hernandez de Luna. Let's take some of these questions and apply them to interpret the artworks of Michael Hernandez de Luna, a Chicago-based artist who has been creating fake postage stamps for over 20 years. Using a computer, he digitally creates stamp-size images using themes that confront social taboos. Using a machine that fabricates sheets of stamps, he attaches one stamp onto a customized envelope, which he then mails to various individuals or agencies associated with the stamp. In some cases postal service has been disrupted because of his stamped envelopes, but in many cases, his stamped envelopes have reached their intended destinations without a glitch.

What comic devices does the artist use? De Luna employs irony through the juxtaposition of text (name and address of recipient) and image, and satire in the exaggeration of an image or concept. He also uses satire and parody to mock the behaviors of political and religious leaders and celebrities.

How do these devices (satire and irony) enable disruption? The subjects of his postage series disrupt our complacent thinking, and show that maybe we need to look more carefully at what is going on in our society and the world, particularly in the worlds of celebrity, government, and religion. On another level, some of the mail art has disrupted postal service.

What kinds of assumptions are disrupted by humor? De Luna's stamps suggest that no subject or individual may be exempt from scrutiny, particularly in our age of voyeurism, and that many events warrant further scrutiny.



Bubbles



Figure 2. *Bubbles* (2012). Michael Hernandez de Luna. Used with permission.

How does image, text, location of artwork, media, and so on work together to create dissonance? The individual stamps create dissonance in their satirical depictions of taboo subjects and cultural figures. The stamped envelope also creates dissonance when discovered as it transits through the mail.

How has the artist been or not been successful at creating a disruption through humor? De Luna has been very successful at disruption on many levels through the application of trickster tactics—shock and poking fun to question human and societal failings.


How may humor serve as a form of activism? De Luna's stamps activate awareness about social and political issues, and offers opportunities for further dialogue and debate.

What personal, art, cultural, and/or social myths are explored with humor? One myth that De Luna explores (and debunks) is the idea that the powerful, rich, and famous operate from a higher moral ground.

What trickster themes are employed (ex: greed, failure, oppression, power and control, beauty, sexuality, etc.)? De Luna uses many trickster themes that include sexual indiscretions, hypocrisy, corruption of power, excess

and corporate greed, and other political and social issues.

De Luna is a trickster artist who takes the everyday and culture as subject, and through satire and irony creates subversive images that critique the social order and make us laugh while jolting our accepted patterns of thinking. Consider the stamp series *Bubbles* (Figure 2) and images of Michael Jackson throughout the years. For years, Michael Jackson was mocked (and even immortalized with the Jeff Koons sculpture) for his relationship with Bubbles, as well as for his facial transformations through cosmetic surgery.



The art educator as trickster-pedagogue who engages in a disruptive pedagogy through humor warrants further consideration, particularly for art educators at the secondary and university levels.

This series can serve as a point of departure for discussion and artmaking about so many issues, such as the idolization of pop culture figures, our culture's obsession with appearances and body image, sensationalist journalism that fuels a cultural obsession with celebrities, and a focus on disasters and the moral downfall of public officials. Since most images that appear on official or sanctioned stamps typically recognize culturally sanctioned historical, political, and artistic figures and places, De Luna's stamps offer a contrary view of stamps.

Bubbles is one example of many works De Luna has created to critique and test boundaries, disrupt thinking, and create a liminal space for us to do the same. To extend understanding of De Luna's work, students might explore ways in which everyday images and objects, like stamps, could be altered through humor and comic devices. While De Luna uses techniques of appropriation and juxtaposition of images, the following techniques might also be explored: *disguise*, or altering the appearance of an image or object so that it is no longer recognizable; *recontextualizing*, or relocating objects or images by placing them in a new context; *colorizing*, or adding

color(s) to an object or image that are in black and white; and *shape shifting*, or taking and altering a form (i.e., making something hard appear soft or making a human form into an animal).

Students could also create their own illustrated or multimedia trickster stories using human- and animal-inspired characters (bear, coyote, crow, raven, spider, etc.) to explore themes of an underdog figure who emerges victorious, or a trickster whose actions backfire against him or her in some way resulting in a moral lesson. Finally, themes that pronounce (and denounce) racial and ethnic stereotyping and poke fun at human shortcomings and social taboos would perfectly and purposefully characterize a disruptive pedagogy.

Concluding Thoughts

The trickster-pedagogue is able to disrupt conventional thinking using multiple strategies suggested in this article. While the trickster-pedagogue may be viewed as a critical pedagogue (Giroux, 1994; Kushins, 2006), critical pedagogy has not adequately addressed the subversive role of humor. While it is true that some "comics serve to reproduce sexist, racist, and colonial ideologies,"

(Giroux, 1994, p. 32), many comic artists do quite the opposite. The marginalization of visual humor from a disruptive pedagogy ignores a powerful means for inviting creative agency and opportunities for re-imagining the world through playful subversion.

The art educator as trickster-pedagogue who engages in a disruptive pedagogy through humor warrants further consideration, particularly for art educators at the secondary and university levels. For it is he or she who may be able to reveal, unravel, and breakdown rigid patterns of thinking early on, and allow for breakthroughs to new ways of knowing and understanding.

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FURTHER READING

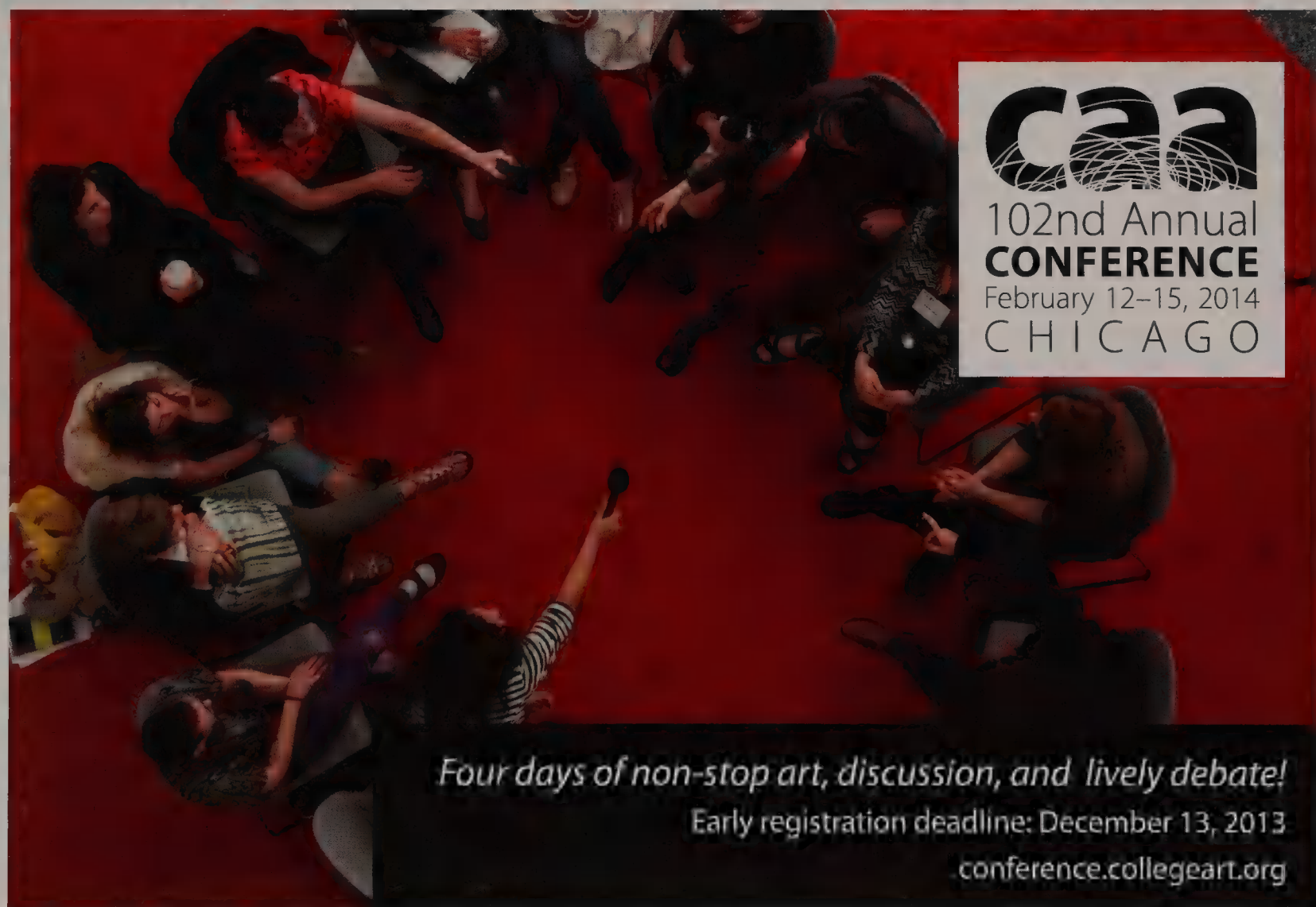
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ENDNOTES

- ¹ A special issue titled "Disruptive Pedagogies" in *Art Education* (May 2009) includes articles from a variety of art educators who offer strategies to resist, confront, examine assumptions about art and power and to see teaching as a 'radical act' (Bastos, 2009, p. 5).
- ² Information about these art exhibitions can be found online and some of the larger exhibits may also have catalogs. See also New University, 2006.
- ³ See Garoian (1999), particularly Chapters 3 and 8.
- ⁴ Native American/First Nation artists include Carl Beam, Rebecca Belmore, Chris Bose (see Dales, 2009), Harry Fonesca, Shelly Niro, and Ron Noganosh (see Ryan, 1999).

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The Colbert Report is examined as a pedagogically rich site of visual culture for secondary and postsecondary art educators.

The Truthiness

About *The Colbert Report*

JOHN DERBY

Following another historic presidential election, art educators do well to reflect upon the complex influence of digital media in shaping our political landscape and future. Young people are voting more than they have in 4 decades and young voters are steadily more ethnically diverse and politically liberal (Keeter, Horowitz, & Tyson, 2008; Pew Research Center, 2012). Research shows that young people are turning away from traditional news and increasingly using shows like Comedy Central's *The Colbert Report* (*The Report*) as their primary source of information (Baumgartner & Morris, 2008; Caufield, 2008; Moy, 2008), and the Internet is increasingly used for sharing political views and information (Pew Research Center, 2010).

In this article, I examine *The Report* as a complex visual culture phenomenon that is highly relevant to young art learners, and I offer curricular strategies that build on the show's Web content (www.colbertnation.com). As media studies scholar Baym (2010) has argued, *The Report* represents a shift in post-network news and public media toward a *neo-modern* paradigm that promotes democracy and social change. Additionally, the website increasingly provides opportunities for participatory engagement through social networking, making it an accessible pedagogical resource for teaching about social issues and media production (Burwell, 2010). However, viewers who are unfamiliar with *The Report* often mistake its critical parody message as a literal endorsement of the things it aims to critique (Baumgartner & Morris, 2008), which poses a pedagogical problem for educators. I begin by discussing this problem and why it demands deeper analysis. I then critically analyze several aspects of the show and its website, which students could investigate and respond to in art classrooms.

Will the Real "Steven Colbert" Please Report? Parody and the Need for Praxis

The Colbert Nation website dryly describes Stephen Colbert as "the host, writer and executive producer of the Emmy and Peabody Award-winning series 'The Colbert Report' on Comedy Central as well as an accomplished author and actor" (Comedy Partners, 2012, para. 1). His bio boasts of prestigious awards, species and spacecrafts named after him, partnerships with major corporations, and a bestselling book. The impressive bio doesn't explain that the actor Stephen Colbert plays a parody character with his own namesake on *The Report*, a spin-off of his previous role on *The Daily Show*, or that the *The Report* is a parody of FOX News' *The O'Reilly Factor* (*The Factor*). Colbert—an ignorant, self-aggrandizing, ultraconservative news pundit—spends most of the show castigating public figures and losing debates with liberal guests while fervently battling his own insecurities. To informed viewers such as *The American Conservative's* Gancarski (2007), the joke is clear: Colbert "lampoons the sort of flag-pin conservative who predominated when the Iraq War was still a popular cakewalk," and in doing so "has done as much to expose the hypocrisy underlying certain strains of conservatism as any other cultural output from the Left" (p. 33).

But the effect of such "obvious parody" (Gancarski, 2007, p. 34) is far from obvious. Research shows that parody fails to persuade audiences of its implicit message, and in some cases it sparks sympathy for the viewpoint it critiques (Baumgartner &



Figure 1. Shepard Fairey stencils a decorative medal and the word "OBEY" onto Stephen Colbert's annual portrait, transforming it into a legitimate and more valuable work of art.

Morris, 2008). A classic example is *All in the Family*, which intended to implicate racism and sexism through the ignorant Archie Bunker character, but audiences sympathized with Bunker and his bigotry (see Baumgartner & Morris, 2008). Aware of this, Baumgartner and Morris (2006, 2008) researched how young viewers of diverse political persuasion interpret *The Daily Show* and *The Report* in comparison with *The Factor*. They found that similar to *The Factor*, "exposure to Colbert increases support for [then] President Bush, Republicans in Congress, and Republican policies" (2008) for viewers across the political spectrum, except regular viewers, who were swayed little. However, the "multilayered criticism of Colbert" (p. 632) reduced the confidence of young people to understand politics, indicating that viewers realize something is awry and that they have much to learn.

It is therefore reasonable to conclude that deep critical analyses of *The Report* could improve secondary and postsecondary art education students' understanding of politics and their processing of political edutainment. Below, I explore strategies for addressing three realms of

The Report: (1) analysis and discussion of the show itself, (2) discussion of Colbert's political involvement that extends beyond the show, and (3) critical interaction with the show's Web content.

Strategies for Addressing The Report

Tune in: Watching and Analyzing The Report

There is plenty of relevant Colbert material available to art educators. Viacom (owner of Comedy Central) has made *The Report* available online, with full episodes and short video clips. The Video Clips page is particularly robust. The center column features thumbnails of popular clips with brief descriptions, which can be sorted by Most Recent or Most Viewed. The left column contains a search tool followed by links to Most Popular Tags Today, Recently Aired episodes, Classic Colbert, and 25 recurring Segments,¹ two of which I discuss below. The Search for Videos tool enables users to quickly locate content by keywords for specific social issues, current events, famous people, and so on. For example, the search term "art" produces nearly 200

clips with thumbnails and brief descriptions, and searches can be sorted and refined. In Episode #06156, Colbert "held a groundbreaking art summit" in which guests Steve Martin, Frank Stella, Shepard Fairey, and Andres Serrano "enhanced" Colbert's annual portrait (Figure 1), which was auctioned off at a major New York auction house a few months later. In the meantime, viewers were challenged to send in their own portraits, some of which were featured on the show and critiqued by famous artists—an example of how *The Report* offers interesting opportunities for audience interaction, potentially in art classrooms.

The WORD. Many of the "segments" deviate from Colbert's straight role of news pundit and use parody and sarcasm in complex ways (Baym, 2010), including the popular opening segment "The WORD," which is a parody of *The Factor*'s "Talking Points Memo." Each night, Colbert announces the "word" to launch his prepared rant; the screen immediately splits, placing Colbert on the left and text against a solid blue background on the right. Unlike *The Factor*, in which printed text reinforces Bill O'Reilly's positions,

the on-screen text in *The WØRD* heckles Colbert, effectively “[turning] the monologue into dialogue, inviting its audience to critically deconstruct the sensibilities of the monologue’s literal content” (Baym, 2010, p. 131). For example, Episode #08044, which aired during the Republican Primary, featured the *WØRD* “Raise Cain” (Figure 2), which dovetailed on Colbert’s ardent support of Cain through sexual harassment scandals. Colbert encouraged South Carolina viewers to vote for Cain as a sign of support for himself, since the locked ballot barred Colbert from getting on the ballot while Cain, who had dropped out of the race, “could not get off” [The text responds: “First Time For Everything,” alluding to Cain’s sexual voracity]. Colbert begged viewers to vote for Cain, because the candidates are so similar in that they are both outsiders, and South Carolina has always loved outsiders [The text responds: “They Used to Ship ‘Em In!,” alluding to slavery²].

In addition to analyzing such content, students could examine how the visual text “provides an unspoken voice, a second layer of meaning” (Baym, p. 131) and how this functions differently from traditional debate. Students could use this

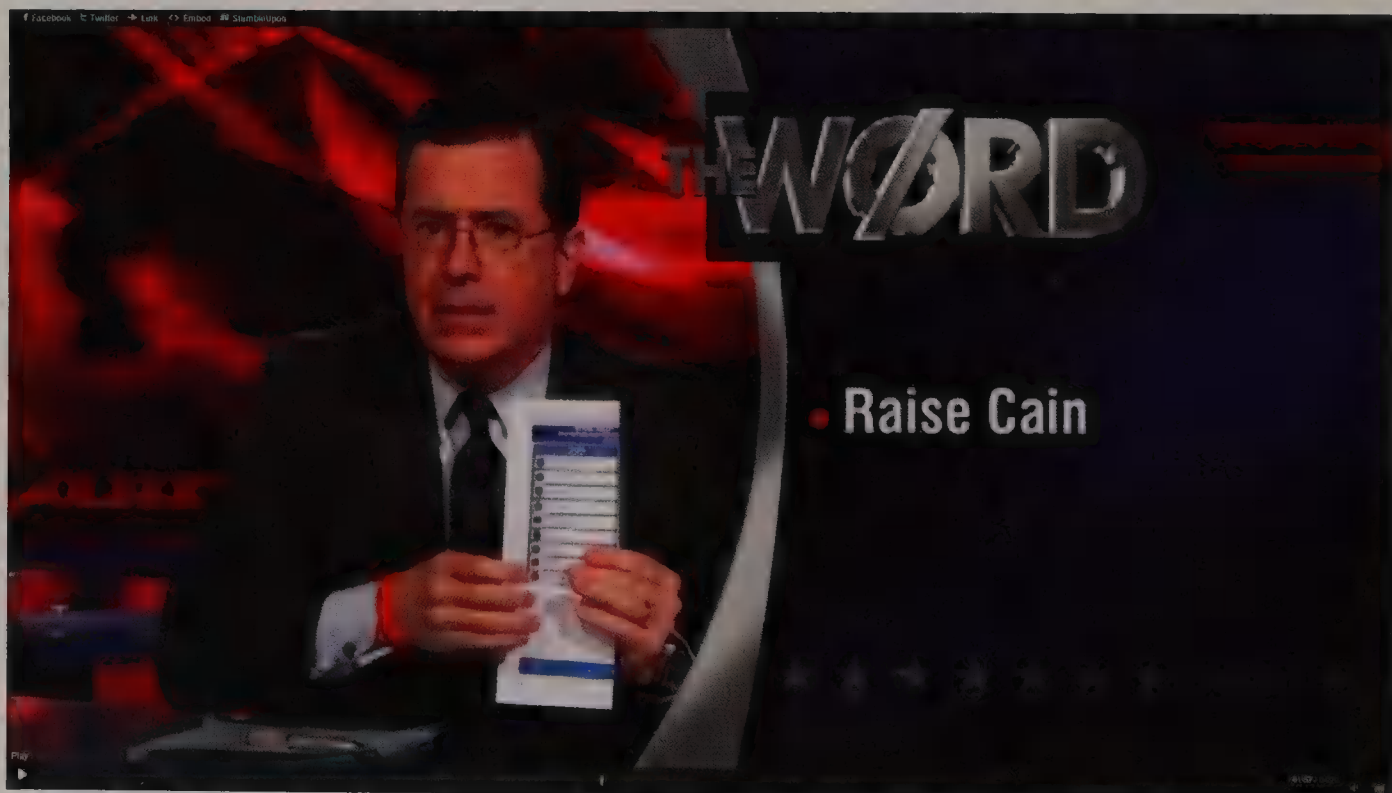
knowledge to alter still frames of news broadcasts with images and text, or create visual storyboards whose text challenges existing captions. This would be especially appropriate for addressing static or video political advertisements or issues-based ads by partisan institutions.

Cheating Death. “Cheating Death” is a segment in which Colbert discusses absurd current events in medical industries. He presents himself as Dr. Stephen T. Colbert, DFA, disclaiming that his credential is an honorary fine arts doctorate. The bit usually pairs actual current events with outrageous products designed by his shady fictitious sponsor, Prescott Pharmaceuticals. For instance, Episode #05035 discusses a Supreme Court ruling against Wyeth Pharmaceuticals that awarded \$6.7 million to a guitarist whose arm had to be amputated after being improperly injected with the company’s anti-nausea drug. Wyeth contended that it was not at fault because the FDA had approved the drug. Colbert explains, “This ruling reminds us that just because a drug is approved by the FDA doesn’t mean it’s safe—which is why none of Prescott’s products are approved by the FDA.” The joke implies that we should be skeptical of both Wyeth and the FDA. He

continues that “unfortunately this ruling also makes drug companies more vulnerable to lawsuits” after which he unveils Prescott’s new drug “Vaxa Plea” (Figure 3), which induces “devastating insanity” by releasing “a lawsuit resistant combination of mercury and oven cleaner that targets the parts of your brain responsible for not seeing spider demons.” Later, a CBS Healthwatch news clip is shown which discusses the plans of The Fertility Institutes in Los Angeles to offer designer babies by using technology originally engineered to screen for disease and then gender selection. Responding to “those who want custom babies but can’t afford designer prices,” Prescott offers the new “Build-A-Baby Workshop, opening soon in a mall near you.” The announcement is paired with a spoof image that looks like a Build-A-Bear Workshop storefront diorama featuring babies and small children. This particular segment criticizes specific medical practices while raising critical Disability Studies issues regarding the pharmacological “treatment” of mental disability and genetic modification of babies through humorous scripts and images.

right
Figure 2. The nightly segment “The WØRD” targets 2012 Republican Party presidential primary candidate Herman Cain, who dropped out of the race amid allegations of sexual harassment.

far right
Figure 3. A bottle of fake pharmaceutical product “Vaxa Plea” can be administered by a drug company to cause insanity, thus preventing wronged clients from testifying against the company.



The images, which are not unproblematic in their own right, effectively function as culture jamming (see Darts, 2004) and a possible entry for analyzing complex sociopolitical issues in art education classrooms. Art students could use *Cheating Death* as inspiration for critiquing real ads for for-profit medical services such as hospitals, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetic surgery. Students could produce spoofs of magazine ads, like those regularly appearing in *Adbusters* magazine, or more ambitious projects inspired by culture jamming practices that disrupt politically neutralized public spaces, such as

'jamming' a high profile billboard, producing and airing a 30-second video subvertisement, or creating a spoof of a corporate or political publication or website that borrows the layout, design and photographs of the original, but which carries a message that is counter to the target site. (Darts, 2004, p. 321)

Students could also research Colbert's assertions and create critical artworks that respond to false claims, greed, and unethical practices of medical industries, including those that are marketed as "good" and rarely questioned.

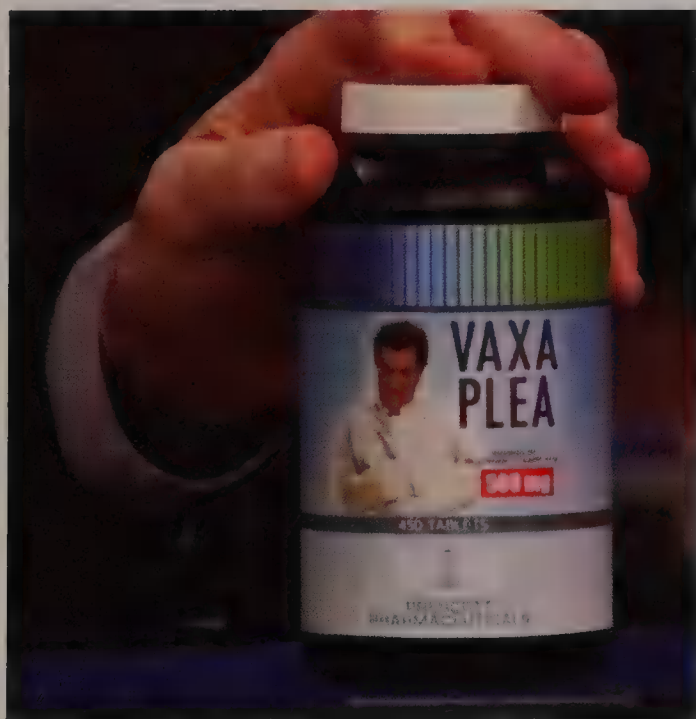
Tuned Out? Colbert's Corporate Ties and Political Activism

Ironically, Stephen Colbert's real-life corporate partnerships and political activism parallel his *Cheating Death* persona, and are perhaps more perplexing. On one hand, Colbert's overstated product endorsements and on-air appeals for sponsorship and fame critique the impartiality of quasinews edutainment such as FOX News. Critics assert that FOX News is a propaganda tool for advancing conservative billionaire Rupert Murdoch's wealth and political agenda, and that media take-overs and quasinews have destroyed the integrity of "real" news (see Baym, 2010). But on the other hand, Colbert works for a giant media conglomerate himself, and his unabashed prosperity straddles the line between irony and hypocrisy. In this sense, *The Report* reflects Jameson's (1991) description of postmodernism as a cultural logic that is complicit with late capitalism, rather than Baym's (2010) description of neo-modernism.

Colbert's boasting certainly presses the envelope, as evidenced by his "real" 2008 presidential campaign, which he announced on *The Report* on October 16, 2007. The announcement—apparently a joke—fulfilled rumors which

Colbert started on talk shows, that his #1 bestselling book, *I Am America (and so Can You)* (Colbert, Dahm, Dinello, & Silverman, 2007), might be a campaign springboard, a traditional political stunt. Colbert vowed to run as both a Democratic and Republican Party candidate, drawing attention to the contradictory nature of his parody. Two days later, he declared Doritos as the official campaign sponsor of "The Hail to the Cheese Stephen Colbert Nacho Cheese Doritos' 2008 Presidential Campaign." The joke about campaign ethics and law quickly materialized and the campaign was canceled, but not before gaining a million friends on Facebook (Rothstein, 2007) and polling an astonishing 13% of all voters (Rasmussen Report, 2007). While Colbert never intended to become president, he seemingly intended to influence politics and sell books, and did not mind endorsing Doritos to do so.

The Colbert SuperPAC. Colbert went further in the 2012 campaign season with the formation of the "Americans for a Better Tomorrow, Tomorrow" Political Action Committee (PAC) (Colbert SuperPAC), which raised over \$1 million.³ Organizations become PACs when their contributions to a particular political



Students could produce spoofs of magazine ads, like those regularly appearing in *Adbusters* magazine, or more ambitious projects inspired by culture jamming practices that disrupt politically neutralized public spaces.



top

Figure 4. Colbert's SuperPAC television ad undermines 2012 Republican Party presidential hopeful Rick Perry's SuperPACs through parody and confusion. The ad mischaracterizes Perry's Jobs for Iowa PAC as an out-of-state, leftist group trying to buy viewers' votes.

bottom

Figure 5. Later in the ad, viewers are instructed to support a different "Rick Parry" by writing in "Rick Parry, with an 'a'" on the ballot; Rick Perry, the Republican Party candidate, is spelled with an "e."

Art learners can better their understanding of parody and politics and in some instances their goals in making critical, expressive art.

campaign exceed a certain amount, and PACs were originally established to make donors visible to the public and to limit funding of individual people and corporations. But two 2010 court cases (*Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, 2010; *SpeechNOW.org v. Federal Election Commission*, 2010) lifted many restrictions, giving rise to SuperPACs, which are independent expenditure-only committees that can raise and spend unlimited funds as long as they are not directly associated with a particular candidate.

The Report's discussion of SuperPACs, centered on Colbert SuperPAC actions, earned a prestigious Peabody Award for its "satirical protest against megabucks politics" that "mixed cerebral comedy with inspired sight gags, interviews and preposterously funny monologues" (as quoted in Michaud, 2012, para. 4). For example, Colbert frequently drew attention to the controversy that SuperPACs cannot be independent since candidates are allowed to attend PAC functions and talk to PACs through the media. When Colbert announced his own candidacy for the 2012 presidency, he turned the reigns over to his "rival" (who is actually his closest professional partner), Jon Stewart of *The Daily Show*, for the duration of his campaign. Stewart renamed it "The Definitely Not Coordinating With Stephen Colbert SuperPAC," and the two frequently dialogued on air about the dubious arrangement. One of the Colbert SuperPAC ads even attacked itself. Third-party candidate Buddy Roemer explained that, "SuperPACs are not supposed to coordinate with candidates like me. But because this is an 'issue' ad about SuperPACs not coordinating with candidates, I can be in it, as long as I don't say 'v[ote] for me!'" ("Vote" is bleeped out.) Roemer describes the court rulings as a loophole that allows SuperPACs to do just about anything they want.

Other ads run during the Republican Primaries, including two in South Carolina and two in Iowa, are arguably controversially misleading. In one ad, South Carolina voters are warned that Colbert is making a circus of the election, and they are asked to send a message by voting for Herman Cain. In a second ad, people are asked to vote for Cain,

but when Cain is mentioned, a picture of Colbert with the text “this guy” is shown. The ad alludes to the inside joke about the locked ballot preventing Colbert from receiving votes while Cain couldn’t be removed—so a vote for Cain would indicate support for Colbert. Whatever the reason, many did vote for Cain/Colbert.

Two other ads attack Rick Perry’s SuperPACs. The ad “Episode IV: A New Hope” begins, “A storm is gathering over Iowa—a money storm.” Ominous music plays while a thunderstorm erupts, raining cash. The narrator warns that out-of-state groups like Jobs for Iowa “think they can buy your vote with their unlimited SuperPAC money,” as a fake Jobs for Iowa logo is displayed featuring the Obama “O” logo (Figure 4). The ad shifts to patriotic music and imagery and the narrator implores, “but Americans for a Better Tomorrow, Tomorrow ask, ‘what about *our* unlimited SuperPAC money?’” Viewers are then encouraged to write in “not *their* Rick Perry; *our* Rick Parry... with an A for America, with A for Iowa” (Figure 5). Another ad shows footage of an actual Jobs for Iowa ad, in which an ear of corn is being shucked. The narrator accuses Perry’s SuperPAC of “trying to pander to Iowans with pro-Perry ads featuring cheap cornography” and the phallus-like corn becomes pixelated. Afterwards, the Colbert SuperPAC endorses eroticized footage of corn being buttered.

All 10 ads can be viewed on the Colbert SuperPAC’s website, colbertsuperpac.com. Through group work, worksheets, facilitated classroom discussions, in-class mock debates, and so on, students could analyze these ads to address the complexities of *The Report* as a for-profit project as well as to better understand *The Report*’s parody and Colbert’s motives. Students could compare these ads with “real” SuperPAC ads that use the same fallacious propaganda and confusing cinematography. In particular, they could analyze the ways in which video, sound, and printed text are juxtaposed with advertisement scripts to send false implications, which adulterate the otherwise accurate scripts. They could also respond with art projects like those previously

mentioned, including design campaign posters, political cartoons, graphic logos, storyboards, and video advertisements.

Stay Tuned Folks: Political (Inter)action With colbertnation.com

Colbert routinely invites his audience to join in art activist projects, in various forms such as the art challenge mentioned at the beginning of this article, collectively changing Wikipedia pages, wearing WRISTSTRONG wristbands similar to Lance Armstrong Foundation’s LIVESTRONG bracelet, Internet voting initiatives, and editing images and video footage, including his own show. Baym (2010) argues that Colbert is moving television into a participatory realm, and many have noted the show’s success in embracing rather than resisting social media, which poses robust pedagogical opportunities for art educators.

In addition to culture jamming opportunities promoted on air, the Colbert Nation website offers many pedagogically useful features. The simplest tool is a “clip and share” feature that allows users to customize clips and share them on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, which can aid educators as well as students in sharing clips. Beyond editing the show, user forums offer a number of opportunities for the Colbert Nation including typical forum posting boards as well as “mix up” video editing opportunities. The website invites users to manipulate and post clips of the show to their own liking, adding music, or other video, and decontextualizing the original. The website hosts thousands of such clips. Similarly, Colbert routinely offers formal creative projects as “Green Screen Challenges,” in which footage is posted online of Colbert doing something against a green screen. Video editing software makes it easy to isolate and remove the green, thus replacing it with new background footage, and additional footage can also be overlaid on top of Colbert. Users can tell new stories that either clarify their interpretations of Colbert or what they wish him to say, create their own parody, or tell their own fake or quasinews event, or create time-based art.

Conclusion

In this article, I examined *The Colbert Report* as a pedagogically rich site of visual culture for secondary and postsecondary art educators. Various research studies indicate that *The Report*’s use of parody can be confusing to young viewers, but that it can also be effective in motivating civic responsibility. Through teacher guidance that promotes critical analysis, the show can also be utilized as an educational resource. As I have proposed, the educational aim of teaching about social issues and media production (Burwell, 2010) can be substantially enhanced through common art education strategies, including critical classroom and peer dialogue, research, and traditional and emerging artmaking practices. By addressing content of *The Report*, analyzing Steven Colbert (person and persona), and interactively participating in Colbert Nation Web content, art learners can better their understanding of parody and politics and in some instances their goals in making critical, expressive art. Through careful analysis and response to *The Report*, art learners in pre-voting years and beyond can better understand our visual culture and become more engaged civil participants.

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ENDNOTES

¹ An annotated list of recurring segments on *The Colbert Report* is available on Wikipedia at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recurring_segments_on_The_Colbert_Report

² Quotes from the show were transcribed from videos on colbertnation.com.

³ According to OpenSecret.org, as of April 4, 2010, a total of 407 SuperPACs had been formed. Americans for a Better Tomorrow, Tomorrow ranked 17th in monies raised at \$1,077,777. Restore Our Future, the top SuperPAC supporting Mitt Romney, had raised \$43,220,562.



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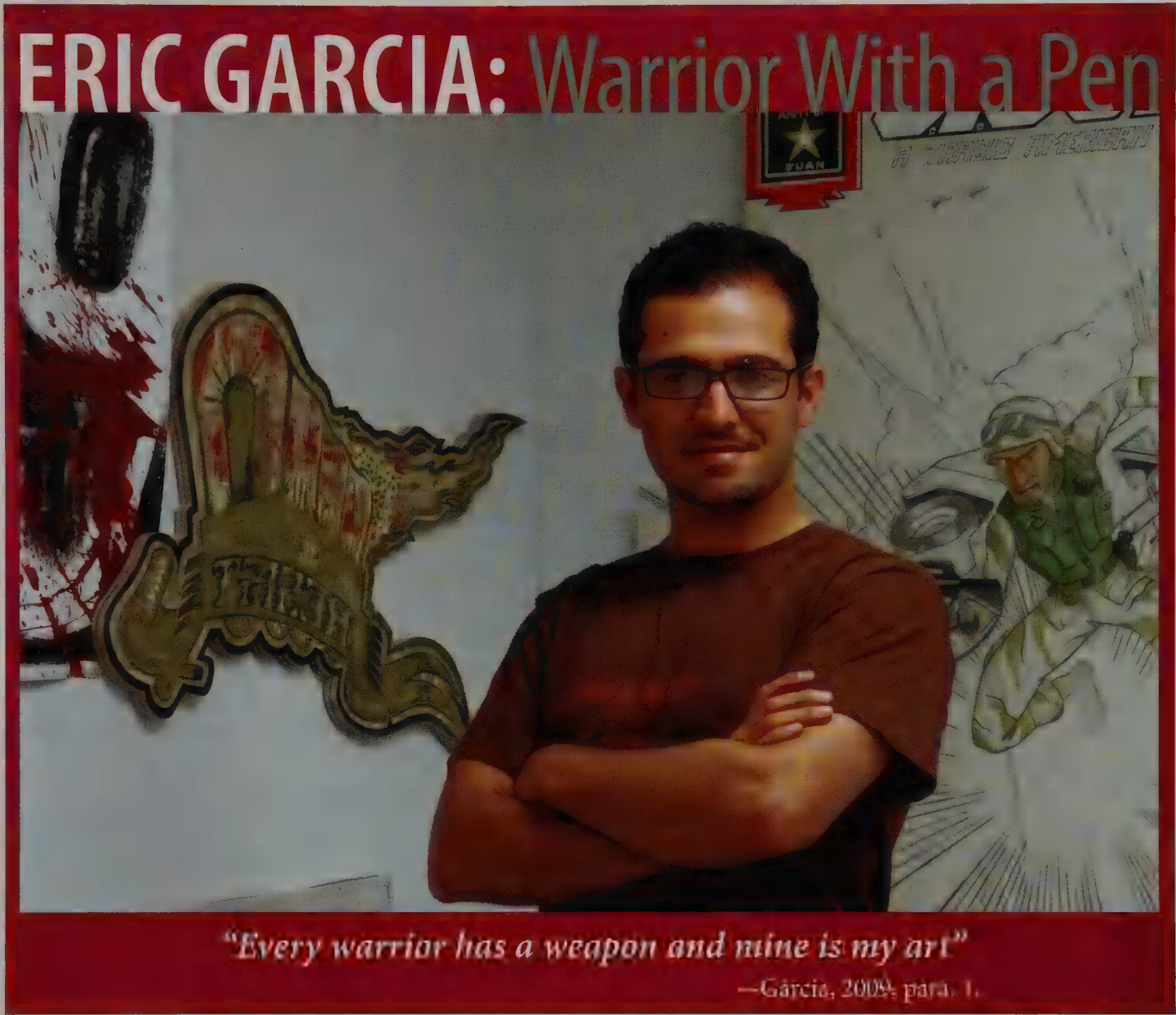
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Eric Garcia's artworks examine parts of American history that have been overlooked, challenging viewers to re-evaluate historical narratives.



JUDITH BRIGGS

Recommended for grades 9-12

Eric Garcia's large-scale oil paintings, drawings, installations, prints, and political cartoons examine versions of American history that have been overlooked and whitewashed. Aware that dominant history reflects a strategy of power, Garcia embraces the confluence of history, culture, and politics to challenge historical mythologies and identities and to prompt viewer reaction to create necessary dialogue. Garcia calls his style "comic baroque," as it contains his childhood influence of comic books as well the Colonial Baroque style of early Mexico. Both were meant to inspire and inform their viewers using a single scene (Nuffer, 2012).

Garcia's artistic goal is to educate and to challenge. While creating paintings for gallery consumption, Garcia also believes that creating political prints in the tradition of Mexican activist printmaker Jose Posada and creating cartoon commentary uses art as a vehicle to reach the greatest numbers. Garcia employs his political cartoons

as weapons to strike at injustice and to expose issues that are often overlooked, whether they are local or global. According to Garcia, visual imagery is a powerful vehicle for telling stories (Nuffer, 2012). Garcia's work reflects on the past, but also poses questions for the present that incorporate politics, critique, and identity.

Objectives

The activities provided in this Instructional Resource will enable students to:

- Distinguish the characteristics of political cartoons.
- Examine and practice the process of creating a political cartoon.
- Use Eric Garcia's work to analyze contemporary issues and events.
- Research a concern and take a stance on the issue by creating a political cartoon.

About the Artist

Eric Garcia was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 1977. As a child, his first exposure to artwork was through comic books, as they were cheap and readily available. As a high school student he became involved with Working Classroom, a nonprofit youth organization for the Arts located in Albuquerque, where he apprenticed with muralist Joe Stevenson. It was at this time that he traveled to Mexico City with his brother and witnessed the powerful murals of Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco, and David Siqueiros. The experience was life-changing as Garcia realized the ability of art to instruct, to uplift, and to inspire (E. Garcia, personal communication, March 2, 2009).

When it was time to attend university, Garcia found that his high school courses had not properly prepared him to take college entrance exams or to attempt college material. Located in a working-class section of Albuquerque, the school, like many urban high schools, was underfunded and ill equipped to prepare its students to compete academically. Instead, Garcia entered the United States Air Force. While stationed in Greece and Italy he visited major European art museums and architecture to prepare himself as an artist. After leaving the Air Force, he received his Bachelor of Fine Arts in painting with a minor in Chicano studies, graduating Summa Cum Laude from the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque in 2006. His work became politicized as he blended editorial cartooning with large-scale paintings, drawings, and prints that challenged textbook history, popular culture portrayals of it, and U.S. attitudes toward Mexican immigration. Garcia's older brother, a committed immigration-rights lawyer and human rights activist, left an indelible mark on Garcia (E. Garcia, personal communication, March 2, 2009).

During this time Garcia also produced cutting political cartoons for the university's daily newspaper as well as for the *Weekly Alibi*, Albuquerque's entertainment magazine. His editorial cartooning won several national awards for student journalism. The cartoons' subject matter, drawn in stark black and white, frankly critiqued U.S. immigration policies, the War in Iraq, and the disarming effects of globalization by U.S. companies. Garcia's artist's statement began with the line, "Every warrior has a weapon and mine is my art" (Garcia, 2009, para. 1).

In 2009 Garcia received a Master of Fine Arts from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), where he continued his activist stance, incorporating Aztec symbolism into his work to highlight U.S. Colonial expansion in the Americas. While at SAIC, Garcia received a prestigious Jacob Javits Fellowship (United States Department of Education, 2008). Garcia currently lives in Chicago, and is involved in community outreach. Garcia sees himself as a critical postmodern artist whose attention to craft enables him to effectively and ethically communicate a social consciousness (Nuffer, 2012). He continues to produce cutting political cartoons for publication and to work with area youth.

Instructional Activities

The following instructional activities are designed for the student to learn—through research, practice, class discussion, and debate—about the importance of editorial cartooning in instigating political critique. Students will create their own political cartoon. Students should consider three major aspects of the cartoon:

- **Subject matter:** What is the artist trying to say? Sometimes a cartoon can say something with images that is hard to put into words.
- **Background information:** What events have led to the artist's political stance? The more information and relevant facts that the artist can find to support his statement, the more powerful it will be.
- **Building an argument:** How can you convince someone with an opposing point of view to accept your argument? How can you use political cartoon techniques to present your case?

Political cartoons use the following persuasive techniques (Library of Congress, n.d. a):

- **Symbolism** to stand for big ideas
- **Exaggeration** of people or objects
- **Labeling** for clarity
- **Analogy** to compare a complex idea with a simpler one so that readers can understand it in a new way
- **Irony** to suggest how things really should be compared to how they really are

Political cartoons are the result of academic research, visual research (producing a series of preliminary sketches), and a honed message in which less said can have the greatest impact. Political cartooning is a unique blend of visual and written text that can have a powerful impact on the viewer.

About the Work

In Figure 1, *Tamale Man #2*, Tamale man, the ultimate Chicano superhero, fills a void in popular media as he battles the ghost of George Washington and the Border Patrol. Likening the new U.S. border fence to the Great Wall of China, Garcia highlights its futility and its source of constant tension between Mexicans,



Figure 1. *Tamale Man #2*, 60" x 40", mixed media on paper, 2007. Photo credit: Eric Garcia.



Figure 2. *Illegal Love*, 11" x 17", offset press, 2008. Photo credit: Eric Garcia.

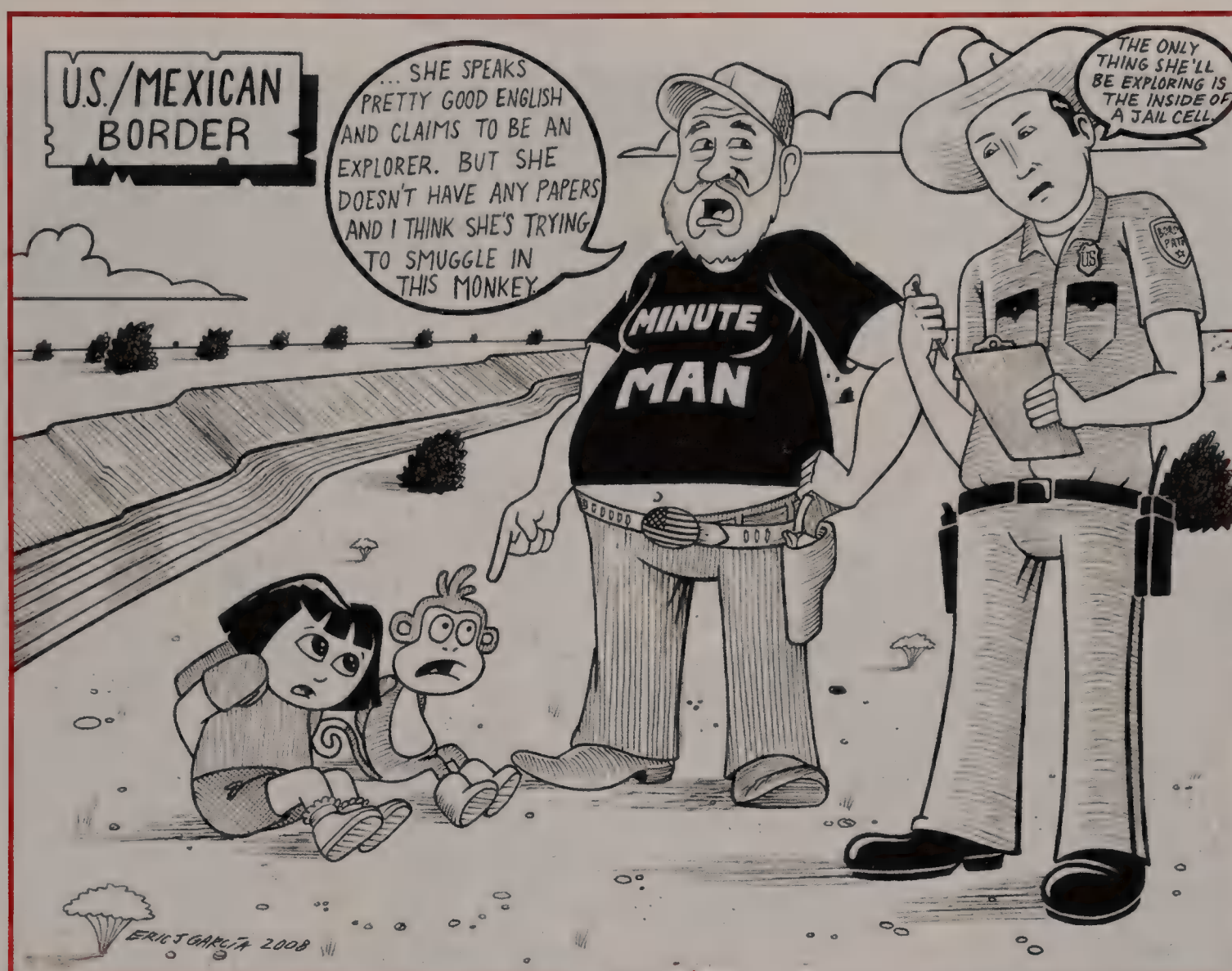


Figure 3. *Explorer on the Border*, 8.5" x 11", pen and ink on paper, political cartoon, 2008. Photo credit: Eric Garcia.

Mexican Americans, and Anglo Americans who choose to police it. Tamale man's humorous persona highlights the average Anglo American unfamiliarity with Mexican American culture and its equation with cultural stereotypes conveyed by fast food restaurants and media personifications. Tamale man vainly declares, "I'm from New Mexico" in the face of an exaggerated caricature of a wooden-toothed George Washington who reminds us of European dominance within U.S. history and identity. Garcia asserts that history can be misrepresented and mythologized, as George Washington was never a Minuteman, and his teeth were not wooden, but ivory and gold (Etter, 2013). The image is a blend of past and present, and the comic book references an Aztec codex, a powerful pictorial pre-Columbian text.

Within Figure 2, *Illegal Love*, a desperate and confused Uncle Sam clutches a Mexican beauty, professing that he can't live with her, but can't live without her. Through the use of analogy, Garcia likens the US's relationship with illegal workers to a difficult love affair. The first three letters of "illegal" form a picket fence, suggesting both an idyllic U.S. image of home, something easily breached, yet a boundary. The beauty is shown sympathetically, if not a bit frightened of Uncle Sam's leer and fervent

grasp. We are reminded of the pervasive underground U.S. economy and of the numbers of raids on U.S. establishments, many with substandard working conditions for both adults and minors (Gutierrez & Baca, 2008; Preston, 2011).

In Figure 3, a character looking like Dora the Explorer, the Nickelodeon television channel's popular Latina character, and her best friend Boots the monkey are charged as illegal aliens by a self-proclaimed Minuteman at the U.S. Mexican border. Dora, an altruistic character, is known for exploring new places and helping people in need. She speaks Spanish and teaches words and Mexican American traditions, customs, and values to elementary-aged Nickelodeon viewers. Garcia's cartoon is an ironic example of racial profiling. It mirrors Garcia's personal experiences. When hosted as a visiting artist at a nearby university, Garcia was asked when his family came to this country. He replied, "Five hundred years ago, the border crossed us" (E. Garcia, personal communication, March 3, 2009).

Manifest Destiny (Figure 4), designed as a comic book cover, summarizes an entire story within one image. It questions the US's 19th-century belief in the God-given right to expand across the North American continent. It portrays August 18, 1846,



Figure 4. *Manifest Destiny*, 60" x 72", acrylic on canvas, 2006. Photo credit: Eric Garcia.

during the Mexican American War/Invasion of Mexico (1846–1848), when U.S. General Stephen Kearney marched into the Mexican city of Santa Fe, the largest settlement west of the Mississippi River, claiming the Province of New Mexico for the US (Gonzalez, 2006). The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that ended the conflict ceded almost half of Mexico's territories, including the future states of California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and parts of Wyoming and Colorado, to the US, paving the way for the domination of settlers of European origin over the Native and Mexican mestizo population that had occupied the area for centuries. In the process, former Mexican citizens lost their land, their mother tongue, and the dominance of their religious beliefs, creating economic and racial disparity that still exists (Gonzalez, 2006). Garcia's own ancestors were members of this disenfranchised population (E. Garcia, personal communication, March 2, 2009).

Garcia ironically portrays General Kearney as a Stephen Colbert-like superhero, striding forward looking toward California with a puffed chest as he stands on the back of a former Mexican citizen who appears to be kissing his boot, while another cuts out his tongue in offering, and a third asks about a land deed. A Native woman raises her hands in exaggerated supplication, and a Spanish woman drops her rosary. The tan color of her skin contrasts with the pureblooded European lineage of the invading forces as designated by Garcia's text label. U.S. forces march under the veranda of the Palace of Governors, suggesting the invasion of an established city.

Discussion I: A Sense of Vulnerability

Begin by displaying *Tamale Man #2* (Figure 1), *Illegal Love* (Figure 2), and *Explorer on the Border* (Figure 4). Ask the students the following:

- Describe what you see in the pictures.
- What does the labeling tell us about the picture?
- Spot the symbols that represent political beliefs.
- What emotions do the exaggerated facial expressions and body language convey?
- Which characters seem to be vulnerable within the cartoons and why?
- Who do the characters represent?
- How have the characters been shown within other historical representations?
- What is Garcia's message?

Review the history of Mexican immigration to the US (Library of Congress, n.d. b). Research and discuss the debate around Mexican immigration. Discuss racial profiling and stereotypes.

- Ask students if they have ever been in vulnerable positions.
- Ask them if they have been classified or misidentified because of their appearance or beliefs.
- Discuss ways in which identities can be fluid and can be different within varying contexts.
- Ask them what ways that the popular media have portrayed someone like them.

Teach the students how to think critically and not be afraid to teach them about their heritage.

—Eric Garcia, 2012

Activity I: Reflective Journal, Use of Analogy

Have students write a reflective essay outlining a situation in which they felt vulnerable. Have them compare it to an event in history or to a contemporary issue in which people were vulnerable. Create an accompanying journal sketch that uses formal elements to convey this emotion. Ask for student volunteers to share their work with the class.

Discussion II: *Manifest Destiny*, Revisiting History

Eric Garcia chose to depict historical and contemporary events that have an impact on his daily life. By using the political cartoon genre, he revisited a version of U.S. history that he learned in school. Divide the class into groups. Have students research the Mexican American War and its aftermath from several different viewpoints: that of the U.S. Government, of Native Americans, of Mexican inhabitants, of the popular press at the time, of dissenters of the time, and of present-day historians. Ask the students to participate in a debate, with panel members from all groups presenting their opinions. Have students view the painting *Manifest Destiny*. Ask them the following questions, which deal with symbolism, exaggeration, labeling, analogy, and irony:

- What is happening in the picture? How do they know this?
- What symbols has Garcia used to get his point across?
- How has he used stereotypes to exaggerate the characters' meaning?
- How does the labeling help us to form a point of view?
- Name an historical event that was similar to this occasion.
- Compare how characters look to how they really are.
- How do you think Garcia's life has been impacted by this event?

Ask students to consider their own relationship to the piece.

- How has this event in history made an impact on your life? What if the Mexican-American War had never happened?
- What are some ways in which national or global events have impacted your community or your life?

Activity II: Creating a Political Cartoon

Ask students to name a concern that they have identified through discussion. Have students research the background of the concern. Using a worksheet, students will answer the following questions: How did the concern start? What are opposing points of view? Who is affected? What is the student's personal involvement with the issue? To what can the situation be compared? What are some phrases connected to the issues that lend themselves to visual images? Have the students turn their ideas into several different working sketches that employ the elements of political cartoons: symbolism, exaggeration, labeling, analogy, and irony. Have students meet in small groups to give peer feedback on the sketches. What are the preeminent features of the characters involved? Remember that less is more regarding text. Encourage the students to develop their own cartoon style. If they have difficulty with figure drawing, suggest tracing figure images. When students have chosen an idea have them map it out on 20" x 15" illustration board with pencil, completing the process using paint, markers, and ink. Using their written and visual research, have students create a written narrative that describes their subject matter, its background information, and how they used elements of editorial cartooning to construct their visual argument.

Assessment

The teacher should examine journal entries and written work for content, clarity, and effort in conveying the topic. Have students decode and share their cartoons within a group critique. Compare this assessment with the students' written narrative for accuracy. Have students complete a short essay stating which cartoons have provided them with a new way of thinking about an issue and why. Using a rubric, judge artworks on how well the students used background research, materials and techniques, and formal and cartoon elements to convincingly build an argument for their issue.

Conclusion

Eric Garcia's work is significant because it challenges us to review our own preconceptions about historical and contemporary narrative, what is included, how it is stated, and—more importantly—what is left out. When asked what he would advise art educators to do when they teach, Garcia responded, "Teach the students how to think critically and not be afraid to teach them about their heritage" (E. Garcia, personal communication, June 21, 2012). It is to be noted that this heritage should not be left unchallenged.

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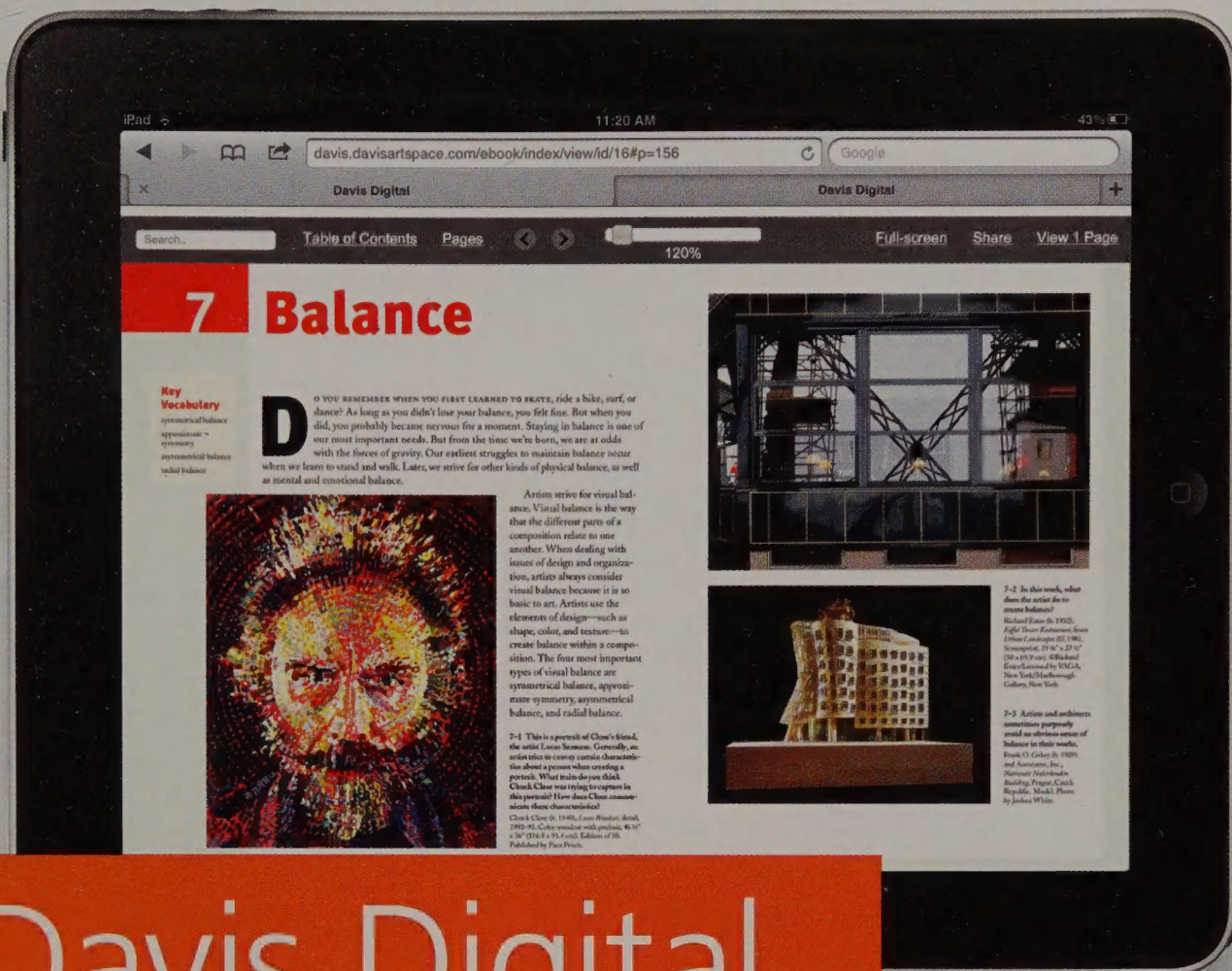


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